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SERMON DLXXXVIII.

BY R. W. DICKINSON, D. D.,
New York City.

TIMELY PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. 2 Kings, xx. 1,

But a few days before this message was addressed to Hezekiah, he was trembling in mortal apprehension. Sennacherib, king of the Assyrians, was approaching the gates of the holy city: his mighty hosts intimidated all thought of resistance: an overthrow, at once inevitable and exterminating, threatened all Judah. But the prayer of Hezekiah is heard. The angel of the Lord passed by night over the camp of the Assyrians, and "in the morning, behold, an hundred, fourscore, and five thousand, were all dead." In vain does Sennacherib betake himself to flight: he meets his death at the altar of his idol-god, and by the hands of his own sons! Jerusalem is again restored to tranquility, and Hezekiah rejoices in the midst of his people.

But how uncertain our prosperities! how short-lived our joys! Behold the king who but yesterday was so miraculously rescued from the destruction which threatened both him and his people. The sounds of joy and rejoicing have ceased. Silence deep and ominous, reigns throughout the palace. Some within its spacious halls move to and fro with noiseless steps; others sit apart with downcast looks; while throughout the city, the people seem anxious and depressed.

It is true: Hezekiah, king of Judah, is sick unto death; and the message which has just been sent unto him, by the prophet, is—"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live."

My hearers, the same God that made and preserved, and at last removed Hezekiah from the land of the living, made, and sustains us; and our times are in his hands. He is the Lord God omnipotent—the Creator, Preserver, and Disposer of all existences. It is his skill that we perceive in our frames, so curiously and wonderfully made; his invisible agency that rescues us from danger, and conducts us in safety; his mighty arm that lights up for us the sun in the firmament so that we may pursue our avocations, and again that draws around us the curtains of darkness that we may rest; his goodness that gathers comforts around our habitations, and strews our pathway with flowers—and when he takes away our breath, this most wonderful mechanism falls to pieces, and crumbles into dust. Amazing change! though familiar to observation, yet no less painful and affecting to contemplate. The eye cannot look out on the objects of its pleasure; the ear cannot take in the voice of love, nor the strains of melody; the hand cannot put itself forth to its wonted task; the tongue cannot move in utterance, nor the countenance reflect the varying hues of thought. The heart has ceased to beat: paleness overspreads the face that once bloomed with health; stiffness, and coldness, and dissolution are fast creeping through the frame that so lately glowed with life and warmth, and moved in the dignity of strength, or the gracefulness of action. The man is dead: *the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit to him that gave it.*

Were it God's good pleasure, he might put to flight the diseases which lurk around our path; might revive our languishing breath, and renovate our decaying frames; might even close the mouth of the pit, and clothe our lives with immortality on earth, with the same facility that he now crowns them with loving kindnesses and tender mercies; but in the sovereign councils of his own will, he has otherwise ordered.

It is he, and he alone, that has preserved your lives through another year; and the message which he sends unto you, by the lips of an unworthy servant, on this the first Sabbath of a new year, is the same message that was sent by the Prophet, to the king of Judah: *Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die and not live.*

It is true that neither the hour, nor the day, nor even the year, of our decease can be known by us. At what stage of human existence we shall breathe our last, has been concealed from us, and for what reasons, we need not inquire; but it is certain that we must all die. The decree has gone forth against our apostate race: *Dying, thou shalt die.* "Death has passed on all men, for that all have sinned;" and every thing around us, as well as the Word of truth proclaims this solemn lesson. O mortal! you may build your walls broad and high; you may flee from clime to clime—summon to your aid the imposing phalanx of art and science, or stand impiously sublime in single-handed defiance of the king of terrors: you may think yourself too obscure for the notice of Death, or too elevated for his reach, or of too much importance to the community to be in danger of his shafts;—'tis all in vain! that position will not secure you; those honors will not dazzle the Argus-eyed monster; that goodness will not disarm his rage; those possessions will not bribe him; those loud prayers will not pierce his leaden ears; the tears of those helpless children will not touch his heart; the united petitions of a prostrate community will not change his fell purpose: "Thou shalt die and not live." That is the destiny thou canst not shun, and towards which thou art driven with a rapidity thou canst not resist. "Thou shalt say unto corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister." Thou shalt at last go down into the dark, cold sepulchre. On its threshold, thou shalt part with all thy possessions—*there* take thy last look of all that is glorious in those heavens, and beauteous in this earth, and dear amid the objects of time and sense: then drawing thy winding sheet about thee, thou shalt lay thy head upon earth's damp lap, and sleep the sleep of death!

What follows? is the question naturally suggested.

"If there is no alternative," says one, "why, I must die, and there is an end of me. The light and comforts of this warm and well-known home are indeed to be preferred to the cold, dark grave, and the endurance of any present ills rather than of those of which we are ignorant; but then death is an event to which man must submit alike with the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. If thus regarded, the mind will become familiarized to its aspect, as it does to the general phenomena of nature. Or, if viewing it as a physical necessity cannot divest it of terror to the mind, then banish all thought of it; and when you obviously can live no longer, 'screw your courage up,' and make the best of a necessary evil. It is your vain imaginings that cause you so much concern. Look at the grave through the perspective of reason. There you can neither regret nor fear, neither think nor feel. You revert to your original nothingness; or should your *spirit* live hereafter how will it rejoice in all the ecstasy of recovered freedom from a body which cramped its motions and enfeebled its powers!"

"If death is inevitable," says another, "let us make the most of life; let us live while we live: yea, eat, drink, and be merry. A long life without such gratifications were not to be endured; and if they cannot be enjoyed but at the expense of shortened days, we shall not regret the forfeit. 'A merry life, though a short one,' is our maxim. What a fool is man to trouble himself about death. Drown the thought in the bowl, the dance, the song, or the whirl of fashion; and let it be your ambition, if you have any, to die in a sensual revel, or after you have tasted life's sweetest cup."

Or, say others, "Let us work while life is prolonged; let us amass treasures that we may raise our families above the ignoble throng, and secure their gratitude, while astonishing others by the magnificence of our bequests: or let us fathom science, gather knowledge, sway the multitude by the tongue of eloquence or the sceptre of power; and when we die, leave our names on some imperishable brass, or more enduring page."

The language of a fourth class is that of dissatisfaction and complaint. "Why then was I born? why endowed with these powers and these susceptibilities, and surrounded by so many objects to excite desire and secure affection? Why wither the arm that has just seized the prize? why dash the cup that has just reached the lip? Why must I give up these houses and lands, these honors and pleasures, and part, too, with the dear ones of home? Better not to have been born, than not live to enjoy the fruit of my labors—be torn, too, from all that I have, and all that I love! O death! thou art in appalling truth mine enemy! I fear, I hate ye! Thou wouldst hurry me from these hard-earned possessions, and this loving home, and lay me naked and alone in that dark and cold and narrow house."

But the text justifies the sentiments of neither of these classes. It does not encourage Stoicism, nor Epicurianism, nor posthumous ambition, nor complaint and repinings. Its language rather is,—Thou shalt not regard death with indifference because it is inevitable; nor banish the thought of it by surrendering your being to sensual pursuits; nor revenge the shortness of life by endeavoring to perpetuate a name; nor murmur at the dispensations of an all-wise and righteous Providence. *Set thine house in order:* prepare for death, by answering life's great purposes; be ready for this inevitable encounter; and as you know not the day, nor the hour, *so* live as to *be always ready.*

We are God's rational creatures—the proper subjects of his moral government—amenable to his tribunal—placed here by him, and ere long to be removed by him to another state of existence, where we shall be happy or miserable, according as we either answer or frustrate the end of our being. We were made not to heap up dust, not to gather the world's plaudits, not to sacrifice our manliness to fashion, not to bury our thoughts in grovelling interests, and waste our energies in selfish gratifications; but *to glorify God and enjoy him forever.* And as we have all sinned and come short of his glory, his Word tells us that if we would regain his favor, and be hereafter admitted to the blessedness of his presence, we have a work to perform—a work from which no one can be excused, and which admits of no delay but at the imminent risk of the soul! It is the *work of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* "This is the work of God that *we* believe on him whom he hath sent;" and until it is begun, each hour is pregnant with a thousand perils; until it is done, we are not prepared to go hence. Our house is not in order: the solemn account between God and the soul is not settled. It is a work that must be done now, or never. Hence it is that our lives have been protracted; and that God, in richest mercy, has continued to us the blessings of his providence, and the privileges of his grace. As he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," and "would not that any should perish," he has given unto us *space to repent, and to do works meet for repentance.* Beyond the grave there will be no such opportunity afforded,—no voice of inviting mercy ever heard. Beyond the grave stretches out in measureless expanse a vast eternity—a state as unalterably retributive as it is necessarily unending: yes, heaven, with its effulgent light, and angels of love, and harps of gold, and rivers of joy—hell, with its worm that never dieth, its fire that is never quenched, its ever ascending smoke of torment!

The present life, therefore, is fraught with momentous issues. It sustains an unutterably solemn relation to the future; and death, what is it?—the separating stream between time and eternity—the step between probation and retribution—the night between our day of grace and the day of wrath! "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." Hence the idea is so frequently conveyed by the scriptures, and in different forms and relations, that as the tree falls, so it will lie; that *there* there shall "in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither worketh abomination, nor maketh a lie"—that eternity will on every hand present to the immediate view of the disembodied soul, in deep, and broad, and burning characters, the immutable decree of eternal justice: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

But these truths are most familiar to your thoughts. Again and again have you heard them proclaimed from the sacred desk; yea, they have been pressed upon you by every argument and the most weighty appeals. I shall, therefore, confine myself to *one* of the many reasons which might be assigned for the solemn duty enjoined by the text; and it is this, that *the hour of death is not the hour of preparation.*

To illustrate the force of this consideration, let it be supposed that you will not be cut off suddenly,—though you cannot fail to perceive that many are: let it also be supposed that you will not be deprived of your reason, nor subjected to excruciating pains of body,—though the supposition is but little warranted, since we may often witness in the last hours of expiring humanity, the tortures of disease, and the ravings of delirium.' To present our idea in as strong a light as possible, we shall, in imagination, lay you on the easiest couch; in circumstances the most favorable for calm and serious thought, if consistent with any sickness that is unto death.

On such a bed, fellow sinner, most probably you will not repent with a godly sorrow: it may not be amiss to remark that very probably you will not have the most remote idea that you are going to die. Placed in these very circumstances which we have supposed to be the most favorable for you, how many have thought that they would soon recover, and hence their impatience, and their only apprehension that their business would suffer from their confinement. You think, perhaps, that friends will inform you: they may not be aware of your condition; or, as is not unfrequently the case, their wishes for your recovery may restrain them from giving utterance to their fears, until any announcement of your danger would be unavailing. But your physician will, you are sure, if he be, as you suppose, worthy of your confidence. No; in all probability he will not, unless he believes in God's word, and that it is an awful thing to die and face the Judge. He wishes you to recover, and so feeble and sensitive have you become, he is apprehensive that you could not endure the *shock* which a communication of such a nature, and so unexpected, might occasion. Mistaken kindness! dread responsibility! thus to blind the eyes of a dying sinner to his actual condition! Ah! how many, through want of timely notice, may have gone unprepared into eternity!

Neither can your pastor tell you of your state; for you do not wish him to visit you, as you have yet no idea of giving *up the world,* and never intended to give religion any earnest thought until you perceived that your own end was drawing nigh. But aside from these prefatory considerations, which are not without weight, we shall suppose that you betake yourself to that bed with the mysterious presentiment that you will never rise.

We assert that to all human view, you are *incapable of duly attending to the concerns of your soul.* Why is it that you have left the busy throng? why are you no longer intent on those worldly matters which you have always deemed so urgently important? why lie you there within that curtained tent so pale and still? *You are sick unto death!* You cannot put forth a steady thought towards those schemes which have engrossed all the years of your manhood: you cannot lift an infant's finger to your accustomed work: your friends keep silence lest they should disturb you: the most ordinary occurrences must not be alluded to in your hearing: you must be kept perfectly still and quiet.

And now, if this be your condition, how are you to address yourself to the great work of your salvation? If you are utterly unable to attend to the most trivial of your worldly affairs, to what you have been long accustomed, what is perfectly familiar and easy, how can you attend to a matter which requires the mightiest effort of your whole moral being? which is incomparably more difficult than any of the business you have been necessitated to lay aside?

The mind, through sympathy with the sickand dying body, is enfeebled, and cannot grasp a subject to which, when most vigorous, it is hardly equal; it is readily distracted, and cannot fix its undivided thoughts on any subject. Think not that I am magnifying the nature of the work which every sinner has to do before he can be saved. Oh no; religion is something more than a sigh, a tear, or a " God have mercy:" it is a great and difficult and trying work. Jesus Christ said that it was difficult, and that if the kingdom of heaven were taken, it would be by violence: the awakened sinner, says, it is difficult: the experience of every Christian, says, it is difficult; while the world itself knows that it is difficult,—contrary to the whole drift and current of its thoughts,—or it would at once close in with the gospel overtures. To drive sin from the heart, to give that heart to God in penitence and faith, to set up a new empire in the affections which have become so wedded to earth, cannot be a facile task: it requires a struggle, a moral struggle to which a dying man seems most unequal; which even the strongest might sink under, if left to himself.

But however certain one may be of his own speedily approaching death, *he may have no disposition* to repent. Has not the man through a long course of years loved sin, and will he now perceive its odiousness? has he not lived to the world? are there not still there all the objects of his fondest thoughts, and will he now see aught attractive in the employments and interests of a spiritual world? All the days of his life, has he not sinned against the knowledge of the truth, and against the monitions of his own conscience? and is it to be expected that conscience will then speak in louder tones? or that the motives to which he has been so long impervious, will then be felt? What says an enlarged observation of death-beds? That conscience, in some instances, seems to be seared as with a hot iron; that in others, the dying man wraps himself in a covering of self-righteousness of which no scriptural reasons can divest him; or quiets his fears by a formal confession of faith and trust in Jesus; or again shows too plainly by the words which now and then escape from his lips, that his heart is still among the world's soul-destroying idols. Alas! many a sick-room has witnessed blindness of mind and hardness of heart—a fatal security, or the hope of the hypocrite!

Say you that you cannot now change your heart, and that you will then look up to a merciful God? We stop not to remark that your present inability is your criminality. Do you perceive the *import* of your reply?—"Because I will not love God now, and am resolved for the present to resist his claims, I shall then be able to cast myself with the greater confidence on his mercy! He is so full of compassion that I may dishonor him, and live unto myself until I can live no longer!" And what will then be your plea? "I have sinned ignorantly."—(No, yours is not the enviable lot of the poor heathen;) "I determined to sin away my whole life; and though my submission to thee now is not voluntary, and only because I can no longer gratify my lusts, yet, for thy goodness' sake, thou wilt not disappoint my hope of heaven!" Oh! how can any one thus impose on himself! God is abundant in mercy; but can he be mocked? God is long-suffering; but has he no regard for the honor of his Name and interests of his kingdom? Are we to presume that he will then hear you, however piteous and importunate may then be your cry?—you who are now intentionally, deliberately procrastinating compliance with his claims? Rather, may he not then say, "Because I called and ye refused, I now laugh at your calamity and mock at your fear." He has warned us, and in the strongest terms, of the consequences of setting at nought his counsels, and despising his reproofs; and is he "a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent?" O sinner! if your hope of a death-bed repentance be not already as the giving up of the ghost, hear the word of the Lord and tremble: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

Search the Bible as you may; amid all the variety and fulness of its gracious promises, you will not find one, nor the shadow of one, to those who *put off God's claims*, and persist in their own ways; not the most distant intimation that any sinner should go on in the sight of his eyes, and in the ways of his heart, and wait for God's interposing, arresting grace. Your blood be on your own head, if you wrest the scriptures to sanction procrastination. You are condemned already: yet, if you make haste and delay not; if you now arise and call upon God, peradventure, he will have mercy upon you; but otherwise there is no promise, and I fear, but little probability, that you will be brought to true repentance. You are obstinately persisting in your rebellion against God; you are putting the compassionate Jesus to open shame; you are grieving away the Spirit, without whose gracious workings in your heart, you must die in your sins!

Suppose, however, that when you come to die *you will be disposed to repent*. By what *motives* have you been influenced? Think you, that the criminal, when led off to execution, sorrows because he has broken the civil law, or because he is about to suffer the penalty of its violation? Might it not then appear on the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that you gave up the world, not because its "friendship is enmity against God," but for the sole reason that you could no longer retain your hold; that you wept not because sin is "that abominable thing which God hates," but because you dreaded its eternal punishment; and that you submitted to God, not from any cordial sense of his sovereign rule and adorable perfections, but inasmuch as there was no alternative. Ah, my friend, your persistive worldliness too truly intimates that you little heed the great things pertaining to God; that the kingdom of heaven, with all its bright discoveries, might fall into ruin, and be no more thought of forever, were only this your continuing city!

But facts prove *that but little dependence can be placed on a death-bed repentance*. No death-bed penitent has ever returned to tell us of his destiny; nor can we look into eternity to allay our anxieties: but you have all seen some one (perhaps, *thou art the man!*) who was given up by his physicians, who took farewell of his weeping friends, so certain was he that the hour of his departure had come. Was he prepared? Yes; *he hoped so*: he had seen himself to be a sinner—had received the word with readiness—had joined in prayer, and prayed himself, and even thought it better to depart. Surrendering himself, however, to the will of God, it was his solemn purpose, whether living or dying, to be the Lord's. He did not die; he is still living; but living,—*how?* Will you believe it? That is the man, the *same man* that so lately confessed and prayed, and hoped in seeming faith; and now, how has he returned to the error and evil of his ways! how intent is he on the world which he then so solemnly renounced! Nay, he hates any allusion to his sick-bed scene: he will laugh away the remembrance, and tell his worldly companions that he was only a little *nervous!* Oh! what wrath is such a one treasuring up against the day of wrath! Well may he be regarded as the vilest of ingrates who thus requites Heaven's mercy! Well may fear and trembling take hold on us, when we think of *his guilt* who thus contemns God, and exposes himself to a seven-fold perdition!

We would not, by these remarks, be understood as dissuading a dying sinner from repentance. No; it is the only thing that remains for him to do. Let him attempt it; let him implore grace to repent, for he is on the verge of the grave, and is soon to go away into eternity! But ah, it may be like the effort of a drowning man—a great effort, but still the bootless effort of expiring nature!

You have no reason to postpone the ordering of your house, or to think that you will succeed at so late an hour. Observation is against you—the Word of truth is against you. There is, indeed, mention made of one who obtained a good hope through grace in his last earthly hour; and we may regard it as an intimation from Heaven that no true penitent, however long and deeply he may have sinned, should despair of forgiveness; but, (as has been often remarked,) it is a *solitary instance;* and does not this more distinctly intimate that no one should presume on the Divine mercy?

The hour of death, then, is not the most suitable time for repentance: view it in whatever light you please, it is not the warranted hour of salvation. The dying man should be undisturbed and calm. He should have nothing to do but to look back upon the evidences of his faith—such as appear in a life devoted to God's glory; to look forward with the even serenity of trust—to commit his departing spirit into the hands of Jesus!

Brethren; how *wise the decision,* which leads one to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; to prepare for life's duties by preparing first for death's solemnities! Suppose such a one to be in the same circumstances in which we have pictured the dying worldling. He is not shocked by the announcement that he must die—is not disturbed by anxious forebodings; nor does he repose on a false security. God's spirit is nigh unto him, in this, the hour of his need, and the promise of God is even as a cordial warm at his heart. He feels that he is going home; and you may learn from his closing hour, the value of Christian faith. You may see the light of immortality irradiating death's shadows as they gather around his pillow; and while you listen to his accents of purity, and praise, and joyous hope, and behold the beams of opening glory resting on his countenance as he sweetly falls asleep in Jesus, you will feel yourself to be on the confines of bliss, and involuntarily give utterance to the devout sentiment: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Here, then, in the same circumstances is the Christian's advantage over the man who lays himself on his death-bed an impenitent sinner! But I will tell you of another advantage, and a greater. The man whose house is always in order, is guarded against *whatever form* death may assume. Is he stretched upon a bed of racking pain? the serenity of a resigned and confiding spirit enables him to bear what, in your case, would be aggravated by the terrors of conscious unfitness for approaching death. Or, does the disorder of his dying body derange his faculties of thought? still, all is safe with the soul: a light cloud rests upon its vision; but it is not the gloomy harbinger of the blackness of darkness forever — O no; it will soon burst its dungeon walls, and shine forth clear as a star in the firmament of heaven! Or say (still more dread catastrophe to the worldling!) is the Christian called to a sudden, unwarned death? he goes not into an unprepared eternity, but ascends at once to the presence and bosom of his God!

We might now show from the tenor of this discourse that there is *great room for erroneous judgments respecting the final state of the dead*; but this were a painful task, nor is it necessary for us to dwell on such an inference longer than to remark that no valid argument for delay can be drawn from the opinions generally entertained on this point.

It is possible for a man to have doubts and fears in his death, and yet enter heaven; and on the other hand, it is possible for one to have no bands in his death, and yet go down to hell. Certain it is, that the circumstances of men's decease are nowhere mentioned in the scriptures as the criterion of their religious character and eternal prospects. There is but one criterion mentioned, and that is the life: *By their fruits ye shall know them.* God alone knows how it is with those who have already gone down to the grave; but if you would ascertain what will probably be your condition in the future world, *keep your heart and regulate your life;* for the Christian will ask—Jesus Christ will ask—yea, the Judge of quick and dead will ask, not how you died, but *how you lived?*

How *unwise is it,* then, *to procrastinate the concerns of the soul to a dying hour!* Where, in all the world, is there like folly? He who neglects his worldly affairs until poverty comes upon him as an armed man, is wise and praiseworthy, compared to him that procrastinates his spiritual interests: for the injury which is done in the one case is limited to the body, in the other it reaches the soul; in the former it is temporal, in the latter, eternal! But how inconsistently do men too often act! You think that there is no time to lose, when a prospect of riches or of honor opens upon your view; nay, for these empty, transient objects, you can forego sleep and food; submit to privations, and hardships, and perils; and yet without regret, or even a thought, you can leave to the mercies of a frail, feverish, helpless, dying hour, the vast concerns of an eternal scene!

Did you ever think of that duration which we call *eternity?* Your present mode of being, (time,) can bear to the future no proportion: it is as a particle of impalpable dust, to the universe of matter; as the small, invisible, unfelt dew, to the mighty waters of the great deep! And did you ever think, also, that there is that within you which *cannot die?* Why, what is your body to that soul? What are the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, to *that soul?* and you, have not yet begun to set your house in order! How many of the days and the years of your merciful visitation have already passed away! gone to the bar of God, and *there* entered their verdict against your perverted being and protracted impenitence!

And now if it be so, that "thou shalt die and not live;" and equally clear, that "thou knowest neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh," is not the present charged with weighty interests? Can any thing around you be so important as the energetic devotion of the present moment to your soul's security? If you stood on some dangerous beach with an unscaled precipice rising behind you, you would not linger nor sport with pebbles until the swelling tide broke its resistless waves at your feet. Hie then for *thy life!* for the tide from the great ocean of eternity is setting in stronger and stronger, and the next refluent wave may bear thee out beyond mortal reach!

There *are some* who feel most deeply the worth of a moment's time; but it is not here, nor in this world, nor in that upper world,—though they who have entered on "the inheritance of the saints in light," may wish that while upon earth they had been more intensely engaged in God's most blessed work : it is in that *lower world* that time is fully appreciated ; *there they feel* the worth of *even a moment ;* and there is not one amid that weeping throng who would not give worlds, or suffer on through ages on ages of toil and woe, could he only purchase *one such moment* as that which *you are now squandering !* Ah ! sinner ; you love death rather than life. You unconsciously, as it were, mean to die, and to destroy your own precious soul ! You refuse to see yourself in the light of God's precious word ; or this moment you would exclaim in anguish of spirit, *Lord, save, or I perish !*

But, in conclusion, once more would I reiterate the words of the text : " Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live :" words, neither inapplicable to my audience, nor inappropriate to the season.

At a period which marks the great revolution of time, it imperiously behooves us to withdraw our minds from all sublunary interests, and to converse awhile with death ; in imagination to weave our own shroud—to dig our own grave—to send an anxious thought beyond its narrow confines—to set our house in order, that we may go down to the sepulchre in peace, and that our flesh may rest in hope.

Do you deem it unnecessary to be thus thoughtful and provident ? Go, visit the graves of those of your number who, since the beginning of the last year, departed this life, and *let them answer*. As you now may think, *so thought they*—that, however others might be taken, they should be left. But where is . . . . , where is . . . , they who have passed hence, and whose accustomed seats in God's house are this day vacant ? And where may *you* be before the close of another year ? In eternity ! in *eternity !*

Men and Brethren ; I wish you all a peaceful, useful, new year ! May he who, in great goodness, has brought you to its commencement, conduct you in health and prosperity to its close. May he bless you, reviving his work in the hearts of his people, and bringing those who are still out of Christ to the heartfelt knowledge of his great salvation !

But as I look round on this audience ; from gallery to gallery, from pew to pew ; as I look at myself, I cannot repress the suggestion that before the close of another revolving year, some one or other of our number *may be—in eternity !* Shall we not then individually inquire, *Lord is it I ?* Shall we not prefer the penitent, humble, fervent, united petition : *So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

SERMON DLXXXIX.

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THE FULNESS OF TIME.

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. GALATIANS iv. 4, 5.

I PROPOSE on this occasion to speak of the TIME when it pleased God to fulfil the promises and send his Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It is the more needful to consider this point, as infidels have often said, and not without a sneer, "If Christianity is from heaven, and is so valuable to the world, why was the world so long without it? Why were four thousand years allowed to pass away before the promises were fulfilled?" It will be my endeavor

I. *To answer this objection.*

II. *To show that Christ came into the world precisely at the proper time.* And—

1. In reply to the infidel objection I remark, no man lives or dies to himself. The *manner* of a great man's death, as well as the fact itself, is the subject of commentary. There is rest for his ashes, but none for his memory. Posterity, as an immense jury, sits round his death-bed for his trial, but its sessions may be adjourned to infinity. History issues no sentence that history may not repeal. "Time fights the battles of truth, an unimpassioned, but unwearied ally." Historical

research brings forward almost every hour new evidences, unravels mysteries, and restores reputations. Envious malignity, or the hatred of party, can never have laid a man's name so low that it may not be lawful to plead his cause before the nations, and call forth a revision of his judgment. We have a happy illustration of this in Carlyle's life of Cromwell. A man's body is laid to rest with his father's, but his principles, his intellectual and moral elements, never fall on sleep. They remain unhurt amid the war of elements, and the wreck and crash of all things else. Let it not then be objected that Christ's coming into the world was too long delayed. The lateness of the world's age when Christ came was *no loss to those that lived before his advent*, for truth is immutable, and was, therefore, the same before and after that event. Truth may have different phases or dispensations, but truth itself is eternal and unchangeable. A time there was, when there was neither sun, nor star, nor angel; but a time there never was when truth was not. Truth has witnessed the beginning of all things, and shall live after the consummation of all things. Radiant with the light of eternity, truth with the sons of God rejoiced in the first lighting up of the sun, and beheld the firmament when it began to glow and kindle and flame forth with constellations. Truth dwelt in Eden, nor could the flaming cherubim keep it there. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, were all men of truth. Truth has indeed often been "crushed to the earth." Her votaries have often been persecuted and put to the torture and to death, but she herself dieth not. "The eternal years of God are hers." And in the ages to come, when the pencil shall sketch the ruins of man's mightiest works, and even of the Universe itself, truth will still be vigorous in eternal youth. At the funeral of all earthly things, she will put on the habiliments of immmortality and live on, undying, undecaying as when first she dwelt in the bosom of the Everlasting Father.

Some branches of knowledge are *progressive*, but truth itself is *independent* of all chance and change, unchangably the same. The *discoveries* of truth may be progressive. In mathematics when once a proposition has been demonstrated, it is never afterwards contested. Every new proposition demonstrated is an addition to the stock of discovered truth. In the inductive sciences every new fact brings theory nearer and nearer to perfection. Nor can there ever be retrogression or going back in the purely demonstrative, or in the purely experimental sciences. Nor can they ever remain stationary. *Their law is progression.* Still the elementary principles are unchangable. For illustration: chemistry is a modern science—a science in which the improvement is so rapid, that it is difficult to keep up with it. Yet modern chemical experiments have neither created nor annihilated a single atom. Nor have they originated a single element or first principle. They have only developed or combined and brought to light what has existed ever since the creation. And such is the perfection and immutability of truth that there never has been a reaction against Harvey's circulation of the blood, nor against the discoveries of Columbus, Vasco de Gama and Cook, nor against the experiments of Bacon, Franklin, Priestly and Black, nor against the inventions of Fulton and Watt, Arkwright and Davenport, Daguerre and Morse. There has never been, nor can there ever be a reaction against the problems of Euclid, the theorems of Taylor, or the laws of La Place. The developments of truth, of mind and science may vary—may be greater and better at one time than at another—may be lost for an age or even ages—may go back and then go forward; but the elements of nature—the great principles of mind and matter—are fixed and unchangable. And yet every fact brought to light, every experiment, every invention, every new development or combination of things, is an addition to the stock of discovered truth, while the *quantity* and *quality*, *nature* and *essence* of truth remain precisely the same, wholly independent of its developments. And the same law is as true of religion as of nature. *Natural religion*, so called to distinguish it from that revealed in the Bible, is the same in all ages. The student of natural theology now is just like the student of theology in the age of Pericles. The Greek had the same evidence of design in the structure of birds, insects and beasts, of fish, flowers and shells, and of the whole universe, that Ray and Durham had, and that Lord Brougham has used in his work on Natural Theology. The reasoning of Socrates as reported by Xenophon to confute the atheist Aristodemus is exactly the reasoning of "Paley's Natural Theology." Socrates makes the same use of the statues of Polycletus and of the pictures of Zeuxis that Paley makes of the watch. And as to what becomes of a man after death, the highly educated man, left to his unassisted reason, is not more likely to come to the truth than a Blackfoot Indian of the mountains. Not a single one of the many sciences, problems, discoveries, laws, inventions, and arts, in which civilization surpasses the attainments of the Blackfoot Indian, throws the smallest light on the state of the soul after death. The Bible is the only light that penetrates the grave and shines steadily on the world to come.

Again, all the great enigmas of the natural theologian are the same in all ages and countries. The ingenuity of a people just emerging from barbarism, or even of a child, is quite sufficient to propound them; but the wisdom of Plato, of Locke, of Butler, and Chalmers is unable to solve them. The book of Job shows that long before letters and arts were known in Ionia, the most perplexing questions concerning free will, the origin of evil, man's responsibility, and the necessity of morals were debated with as much skill and eloquence in the tents of the Idumean Emirs, as they have been ages since in the halls of Oxford ; nor has human reason in the course of three thousand years, discovered any satisfactory solution of the riddles which perplexed Eliphza and Zophar.* Enough has been said to prove that natural theology is not a progressive science, and the same thing is true of revealed religion. The Bible is a sure and certain summary of doctrines and duties—a full and perfect rule of faith and practice. All the discoveries of all the travellers and philosophers in the world cannot add a single verse to any one of all the chapters of any one of all the books of the Bible : nor a single doctrine or precept needful for human progress and happiness to our holy faith. Pharmacy, geology, agriculture, chemistry, navigation and commerce may constantly improve, but religion was as good a thousand years ago, as it is now, and it is as precious, as sufficient now as it will ever be. A Christian with his Bible in his hand in the fifth century, is on a par with a Christian in the middle of the nineteenth century. What does it matter that we have the compass, the art of printing, gunpowder, steam, gas, vaccination, electrotype, and daguerreotype, and a thousand other types and a thousand other discoveries and inventions, and a thousand too many *isms*, which were unknown in the fifth century? None, nor all of these discoveries and inventions have added the smallest particle to the value of the blood of Christ, by which alone sin can be washed away, nor have they extracted a single agony from the awakened conscience laboring to find peace with God. It is obvious, then, since truth—all truth, physical and moral, is unchangable, although its manifestations may be different in different ages—that truth is truth, whether discovered in one age or in another; so the gospel as a system of truth, is the same whether introduced in the year of the world 4004 or 6000, or 1000, and consequently there was no loss to those who lived before the incarnation merely from the fact of its delay, for

2. The virtue of Christ's atonement depends not upon the

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* See this subject ably discussed in the Edinburgh Review for October, 1840.

year of the world when it was made, but upon His *divinity.* The blood of Christ is a sufficient atonement, whether shed at the beginning or at the end of the world.

It is true those who lived before the coming of Christ, had not the same degree of light that we enjoy ; but they had the same unqualified promise that whosoever looked to the Lamb of God who was *to be slain*, should be saved. They were saved by faith in a Saviour *to come*, just as we are in a Saviour who *has come*. For out of all ages, " *whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*"

As respects, therefore, the salvation of those who lived before the coming of Christ, the difference between them and us is, that they believed in a Saviour *to come*, while we believe in the Saviour *who has come*, and actually died to redeem us. The pious before the coming of the Messiah were pardoned and renewed in heart and spirit, and finally admitted to heaven on the same ground that the pious are now, *the vicarious death of Christ as an atonement for sin.* Had the Gospel dispensation been introduced a thousand years sooner, still those who then lived might have asked why it had not been published a thousand years before. We might as well ask why it was delayed at all, or why it was not delayed till now. If the redemption of man is liable to this kind of objection, so is his creation ; and as some portion of time must have preceded both his creation and redemption, according to infidel wisdom man ought never to have been created or redeemed. We may just as wisely challenge the great Creator to know why we are not made with four hands instead of two, or why we have not the lion's strength, the elephant's body, or the eagle's wings, or why we were not born in the time of the Cesars, or of Chinese or Japanese parents.

The apostle intimates in the text, that there was as much propriety in delaying the incarnation of Christ, as there is in not allowing a minor to possess the property and privileges of an heir. Now I say that the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world ; but *when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son.* Having thus endeavored to remove the objection as to the lateness of the incarnation, I shall now attempt to show that

II. CHRIST CAME AT PRECISELY THE PROPER TIME.

1. There were circumstances connected with the period of Christ's coming, which prove that it was the fulness of time

—the time of all best suited for the introduction of the Gospel. This is true as it respects *the state of human languages*, at the time of the Advent. Language is the present medium of intercourse between man and man. It has also been used as the chief medium of Revelation, or of making known the Divine will; and it is for this reason that the Son of God, by whom His will is made known to us, is called, by way of eminence, the *Word*. Language is the embodying power, the incarnation of thought. We can almost as easily imagine a soul without a body, as thought unclothed or without the form of outward expression. It is indeed a point in dispute in the learned world, whether a man can think without the use of words in his mind. It is not strange, therefore, that God has adapted the time of his great Revelation to us, to the state of human language. " Literature," says some one, " is the soul of history," and God is in history. His finger writes all history. A nation's literature is an index to its principles and character. It represents at one view, the culture, the theology, the ethics, the degree of intrinsic purity and outward prosperity of a nation. Our leading statesmen and scholars, who feel a just and laudable interest in the success of the long talked of Japanese expedition, form their opinions respecting the character of the people, government, religions and customs of the empire of Japan, from what they learn of its literature out of books that have been published by the Portuguese, Dutch and English, or by our own countrymen. The literature of Japan tells the origin and history of that singular nation as far as known; what they have done for themselves, and what fortunes, and pervading and retributive providences have befallen them, and furnishes a sort of key to unlock their future. The literature of China, Greece and Rome expounds their moral and political history. This is precisely what we should expect from the nature of language. It is the organ of the soul's conceptions. It must therefore in turn, mould, control and modify its peculiar character, so that the mind of a nation will correspond to its language. This is true even in modern times. The German language is no bad mirror of German mind; and every one who sees a Frenchman and understands his language, must be convinced that the one is made for the other, exactly according to measure. But the point in hand is pre-eminently true of all ancient languages, when trade and travel had not modified national words or incorporated so much that was foreign into the native tongues as has been done with ours, and with most living languages. Let us take what is called the *Semitic family* of tongues, to which the Hebrew and Syriac belonged. This whole family is destitute of particles and grammatical forms such as we use to express the relations of things, stiffened by an unyielding construction, and confined by the dependence of words upon verbal roots to outward action. Such a language could not be used for abstract or abstruse ideas. It was suited only for the simplest historical narratives, and for poetry in which images and figures and sensations succeeded one another in rapid course. Hence no school of native philosophy has ever arisen, nor treatise of metaphysical thought ever appeared in any of the dialects of this family. This family of tongues was for the *preservation* rather than for the *propagation* of revealed truth. Such was eminently the nature of the ancient Hebrew, the language of Abraham, to whom were committed the oracles of truth ; and the intellectual character of his posterity, as well as the nature of their language, fitted them to be the depository of revealed truth. As they yielded themselves to the awful ministry of Jehovah's prophets, so did they cling with most astonishing tenacity to the simple history of their early ages. The Old Testament, containing the deepest Revelations of religion, the most awful denunciations of prophecy, the wisest lessons of virtue, and the sweetest strains of heavenly poetry, was given to the world in the Hebrew language, which, if not the only language that could have preserved and transmitted uncorrupted the word of God, was certainly adapted for this mission in a most remarkable degree. But when the fulness of time was come, when the Old Testament dispensation was to be fused into that of the New, then God changed the language which had been the medium of his Revelation, from the Hebrew to the Greek. Abraham's posterity and language were to keep alive on earth the knowledge of one true and living God, and the promise of the coming of a Messiah. The Hebrew character and language were fitted for this. The Gospel on the other hand, was intended for the *whole world*, and for each individual of the human race. In Abraham's seed, all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Christianity was not, therefore, intended to be the shibboleth of a party, nor the badge of a sect or nation, but the creed of mankind. It is evident, then, that it was necessary to give it to other than Jewish husbandmen—to give it to men whose intellectual character and language might be adapted to introduce it into every country, and into the language of every people on earth. The oracles of revealed truth in the gospel dispensation were given to men of deep mental discipline, whose ever eager impulse to investigate would discover more easily, and bring to light their inexhaustible beauties ; who would know and communicate their claims upon inspiration—and by searching out their connections with one another, and with the varied but wise and harmonious dispensations of God, bring forth new motives for conviction—new themes of praise. And in all these particulars we find that the *gospel came in the fulness of time*. It was revealed to men, and in a language, and at a time, best suited for the accomplishment of its glorious objects. The Roman arms had subdued the world to Roman laws, and consequently their language and that of the Greeks, which they read and spoke, and which had prevailed most extensively from the conquests of Alexander the Great, filled almost the whole of the then known and peopled world. The Greek was the language then most universally understood, and the language of all then in existence, best suited for the preaching of the gospel. It was the fulness of time, therefore, for the Son of God to come, as the world was then so far at peace, and the laws and prevailing language of one empire so well known, that it was a favorable time for the propagation of truth. The contents of the New Testament were committed to men whose intellectual character and language, in a very special manner, fitted them to investigate their claims to inspiration. No age would have been better fitted for the adoption of Christianity than the Augustan age. The temple of Janus was shut ; the clangor of arms has ceased. The Roman roads, trade and commerce became pathways for the feet of the messengers of the glorious gospel of the Son of God. There was no period before, nor has there been any since, when the gospel could have been introduced with such facilities for its propagation as at the time Christ actually set up his kingdom among men. The Mosaic law, the religion of the ancient Jews, was communicated to them in a language of all best adapted for the reception and preservation of such articles of faith, and the articles of faith thus revealed, were such as were needful for the age of the world in which they were made, and the preparation of mankind for the manifestation of "God with us." And the gospel being for all ages, and for all the world, was revealed in like manner in an age and in a language, and to a class of men better fitted for its propagation, all things considered, than any other age, language, or men that have existed.

2. In the second place it was the fulness of time when Christ came, for the world was then prepared *to examine the claims of the gospel*. Both Gentiles and Jews were prepared to detect an imposter. The Jews had been taught by Moses and their prophets. In Judea, there was Jerusalem, the holy city, with its temple and its priests, and sacrifices, and prophets, and holy writings. And in the Grecian isles there stood Athens, "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence."

There the olive grove of Academus, where Plato studied—there the schools of ancient sages, the Lyceum and the painted Stoa—and there philosophy from heaven descended to the low roofed house of Socrates, " whom well inspired the oracle pronounced wisest of men"—the Academics, Peripatetics, Epicureans, and Stoics, and boasted poets, wits and philosophers of mankind. Moses and Samuel, David and Isaiah, Demosthenes and Aristotle, had all lived and taught before the coming of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles had been taught to expect some great religious teacher about this time. The whole world was looking for a Messiah. He was the DESIRE of all nations. The Gentiles had no well defined ideas, but were expecting some manifestation from heaven. They had long sat at the feet of the wise men—had long lived in the light of tradition, and wandered after the torch of philosophy over the dark mountains and dreary deserts of idolatry and superstition. They had had oracles and poets, and philosophers and sibyls. Their own longings and hopes all concurred to produce a general expectation that some great personage was about to come into the world—Virgil had framed his eclogues after some of Isaiah's visions.

Nor is it strange that the learned should have indulged such hopes—for Ptolemy Philadelphus had caused a careful and complete translation of the Hebrew scriptures to be made into the Greek tongue one hundred and eighty-six years before the coming of Christ. All the curious and learned were therefore acquainted with the writings of the Hebrew prophets.

Again, the age of Christ and his apostles was pre-eminently an age of *scrutiny* and *inquiry*. Cicero had previously introduced that system of argumentation which doubted and disputed everything, and taught that nothing was to be received without proof. If Bolingbroke and Hume, Voltaire and Paine, had lived then, they could not have brought more talent and learning, more wit, subtlety, raillery and malice, impudence and blasphemy, into the field against the gospel than was then employed.

The Jews were under the Roman yoke, and had no hope of deliverance but from the Messiah. On the other hand, Romans were jealous of losing any portion of their power. And hence, both would scrutinize the claims of Christ, as the promised Messiah, until they saw clearly that his *kingdom was not of this world*.

Now, as it is a maxim in law, that a man shall not be put in jeopardy of life and limb twice for the same offence, and as Christianity was tried in the first centuries by every species of opposition, and triumphed most gloriously, should we not now regard it as an incontrovertible fact that the Son of God did come in the fulness of time, to seek and save our lost world, and that there is salvation only through him?

3. It was the fulness of time, *because the world was then fully able to appreciate the doctrines of the Gospel by comparison and contrast.*

Does infidelity inquire—why did not Christ come sooner? Ans.—No teacher like experience. Had he come a century sooner, philosophy would have contended that she was fully able and competent to instruct and rule mankind. God in his wisdom left the world to try its own strength, until it was manifest that by her own wisdom she knew not the true God, nor could she, by searching, find out *the way, the truth,* and *the life.*

When Christ came, the doctrine of immortality was almost expunged from the creed of the race, and the practice of suicide had become popular and common. But although philosophers could blot the doctrine of immortality from the creed it could not root its idea out of the human mind. Life was too dear, and the love of life was too ardent, to be readily given up; and hence, at the precise period when immortality was so longed for, and men were sick of the doctrine of annihilation, Christ came, and *brought life and immortality to light.* Man's extremity was God's opportunity.

At that time, too, the doctrine of *sacrifices* was fully understood—" It is true they had declined in the Jewish temples, but were taken up with increasing eagerness by the heathen. At the time Christ came, the doctrine of vicarious sacrifices was most popular, and the offering of those sacrifices at its highest pitch. The altars of Jupiter blazed incessantly: but they blazed in vain; those who offered them found that the *blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin.* And at the precise period when sacrificers became tired of their round of offerings, at the very moment when hope was about to give up the ghost, Christ came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Yes; at this solemn crisis, when philosophy failed to teach men the way of happiness, and the sacrifices which had so long been confided in were about to be put away, then Christ came to teach men the way of life and salvation, and then was his blood shed to ransom men by thousands and millions."—*Dr. Philip.*

4. There was no time from the creation to the Advent, nor has there been since that event, so proper for Christ's coming, as the time when he did actually come.

It would have been untimely during the antediluvian age, or at the time of the flood. There was no man living then able to have written an account of it, or to have written such an account as would have interested all the ages of the world in time to come. Hence it was delayed until an age of learning and philosophy, when the facts were all scrutinized, and the records made so as to stand out pre-eminently beyond all other writings.

Nor was it a proper period *from the flood to the time of Moses*. Then the world was not only uncivilized, but sparsely populated. Then there would have been but few to see him, and fewer still able to appreciate his worth.

Nor was it the proper time *from Moses to the prophets*; because even the Jews were then as minors under tutors and governors—under the elements of the world, and unable to understand the spiritual nature of their own dispensation. They groped in darkness even when Christ did come: how much more were they unfit to receive the Messiah, when just emerging from the bondage of Egypt, with all the associations which their minds had formed in that land of gross idolatry and bondage. Nor would it have been any more a proper time for Christ to have come during the period of the four great monarchies. If Christ had come then, infidels would have said Christianity is the mere invention of the Nimrods and tyrants of past ages—is a mere political scheme to bring men under the rule of despots.

Finally. Christ came in the fulness of time, as it regards the *types*, *promises* and *prophecies*, which all concurred in fixing the time of the actual advent, as the time appointed of the Father. If Christ had come immediately after the expulsion from Eden we should have been deprived of the instruction of these types, promises, and prophecies. And as he could not have come sooner, so neither could he come later, for the types, promises, and prophecies were fulfilled and came to an end in the age of the advent. According to the Hebrew scriptures, Christ was to come while the second temple was standing—while there was yet a sceptre in Judah, and a law-giver between his feet, and of the line and lineage of David. All these points meet in Christ and the advent. But in no age since could they be converged upon any point of time, nor upon any family of Israelites. The nation and temple were destroyed by the Romans. Their genealogies are lost. If Christ be not the Son of God, the true and long expected Messiah, the whole Bible is a fable. But the Bible is not a fable. It is the word of the only living, true God, who did send his Son in the fulness of time, as indicated by types, promises, and prophecies, and the united longings, necessities and out-cryings of all nations and ages.

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SERMON DXC.

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HEAVENWARD TENDENCY OF THE REGENERATED SOUL.

If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Colossians iii. 1.

There is in this passage a retrospective allusion to the twelfth verse of the preceding chapter: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Believers are thus represented as having been buried with Christ in baptism, and also as having been raised with him through faith. Being buried with Christ, and being raised with him are antithetical phrases,—from which we infer that, as being raised with Christ is a *spiritual* resurrection, so being buried with him in baptism is a *spiritual* burial—in other words, a death unto sin. The Christian's burial with Christ implies that death unto sin, which at baptism he professes to have experienced,—a death that is followed by a resurrection with Christ to a new and higher life. The exigency of this passage does not require such an interpretation of the apostle's language as implies exclusive reference to the visible administration, or the mode of baptism. The scope of his argument relates to a spiritual change experienced by the believer as one who is dead to sin, and raised with Christ to a new life.

After having risen from the dead, Christ ascended to heaven, where he "sitteth on the right hand of God." As believers have risen with him, so also will they ascend with him, in their aims and *desires, attracted* by those things above where he dwells. Faith sees him on the right hand of the Father, where he administers the government of the world with special reference to the welfare of his disciples, and the glory of his kingdom. Around his mediatorial throne majesty and mercy spread their mingled attractions, and heavenly realities lend enchantment to that land of pure delight to which faith and hope aspire. It were to be expected that the believer in Jesus, being dead to sin and to the world, and alive to holiness and to God, would find himself attracted by the perception of those things which are above. We derive from the text the following sentiment:—THE EXPERIENCE OF A SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION WILL BE FOLLOWED WITH A CONSCIOUS SUSCEPTIBILITY TO THE ATTRACTION OF THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

The *import* of this resurrection, the *agencies* concerned in its production, and the *susceptibility* to the attraction of heaven which it inspires—are the topics contemplated in the present discourse.

I. The *import* of this spiritual resurrection.

1. The idea of a resurrection involves its antithesis, *death*. The moral condition of man previous to regeneration is represented by the idea of death: "You hath he quickened, who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." This mode of representing the subject is borrowed from the language of the original penalty, which connected death with disobedience. This state of apostacy is fitly represented by death, because it implies the loss of spiritual life, insensibility to the claims of God, a deprivation of true happiness, and exposure to all that is corrupting and destructive in the dominion of sin—all that is appalling in the penalty of law. The term death is often employed in the Scriptures as the symbol of supreme evil. Nothing is so much dreaded as death. In the common mind it is associated with what is supremely painful, revolting, and terrific.

As no other term conveys so vivid an idea of wretchedness, it has been employed to represent the miserable state to which man has been reduced by transgression. There are strong points of analogy between physical and spiritual death. In the one case there is the extinction of natural life—in the other the absence of spiritual life. The one is attended with suffering and dissolution—the other with the anguish of a guilty conscience, and "a certain fearful looking for of judgment." A vivid representation of man as dead in trespasses and sins, requires the strongest terms in language. It is from this condition of guilt and wretchedness the believer is rescued, when he has risen with Christ. "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together with Christ."

2. There is another sense in which the term death is used in relation to the believer. Thus when the apostle represents the spiritual condition of believers, he says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This is spoken of those who are in a regenerated state, and must be interpreted in accordance with the facts pertaining to such a state. The idea is, that of being dead *to* something—especially to the world and to sin: it expresses a state of freedom from the power of sin,—from its servitude and dominion. Hence the instruction of Paul to the Roman Christians:—"likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It was not the design of this language to represent believers as absolutely and perfectly free from sin. The sense in which they are dead to sin is this:—they have been made to realize its hatefulness; have renounced its dominion, and entered on a determined course of such resistance to it as ensures ultimately its entire destruction. The new man created in the believer may be alive and active without yet having acquired absolute dominion. The old man is not at once so crucified as to cease from sinful activity. As the process of *living* goes on in the one case, the process of *dying* goes on in the other. Life in the new man grows stronger and stronger, while life in the old man becomes weaker and weaker—thus clearly indicating the nature of the final issue. "Therefore the life of the believer," to adopt the words of Olshousen, "exhibits itself as an oscillating between two poles of life."—It is in this sense that the believer dies to sin.

3. Another thing implied is the *conscious experience* of a new, vitalizing element in the soul. When Lazarus was raised from the grave, he was conscious of the vital power of his restored life. How it was produced he might not comprehend; but after it had been restored he had the conscious experience of its influence. So the man whose sight was restored, though he could not tell how his eyes were opened, could affirm as a matter of distinct consciousness, "Whereas I was blind, I now see." So likewise hearing the sound of the wind is a matter of consciousness; though we cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. In like manner the sinner on experiencing the regenerating work of the Spirit, becomes conscious of the *fact* that his mind is pervaded and influenced by a new element of power, which so vitalizes his dead spirit, so influences the will, that he finds himself seeing with new vision, hearing with new emotions, pursuing new objects. The new element of life in the soul may at first be feeble;—still it is real life. As it matures in strength, it will, by its effects, create the conviction, that there has been experienced a radical change in purposes, desires, hopes and conduct.

The man who lies in a state of suspended animation, may be unconscious of what passes around him,—unconscious of the length of time during which he continues in that state,—and unable to recal any recollection of the first breath of restored vitality ; but it will not be long before he realizes fully the fact that he is reanimated—that he feels the throbs of vital pulsation. So when the man dead in sins is raised to a new life in Christ Jesus,—he must soon become conscious that a change has been experienced. New impulses are felt in his soul, urging him in the direction of new activity, the tendency of which is upward towards higher and holier objects of pursuit. Things to which he had been blind, he now sees ; things to which he was once averse or indifferent, he now admires ; duties which once were irksome and neglected, he now performs with alacrity and pleasure. Thus it is that having risen with Christ he becomes conscious of a new, vitalizing element in his soul.

4. Another thing involved in the experience of the spiritual resurrection is an *assurance and foretaste of a glorious immortality.* The conviction of the truth of the soul's immortality is confirmed. While under the supreme control of this world and its delusive influences, there is, in most instances, but a slender and inoperative conviction of the truth of an immortal existence beyond the present life. Many of the phenomena which meet us here, rather militate against, than favor this doctrine. There is, indeed, presumptive evidence of its truth in the prevailing sentiment of the mind,—which looks and longs for a future state of being. But may not this sentiment be a delusion ? Who has analyzed the argument on which it rests, with such success as to give it the cogency of demonstration. Aside from Christianity there is no reliable and satisfactory source of light on this mysterious problem. The materialism of Epicurus, to which atheistical philosophy has in modern times added its support, though disavowed in its dogmatic form, exerts a secret, subtile, unconscious influence on many minds. This accounts for their profound indifference to the themes of immortality, to which such prominence is given in the scriptures. The manner in which the men of the world live; their governing purposes and desires ; their activities and enterprizes—need but little if any modification to be perfectly consistent with a disbelief in the doctrine of a future state. This momentous doctrine fails to exert its appropriate influence except where it is firmly embraced by Christian faith. It is only the regenerate man that feels the powers of the world to come, and acts in consistency with the divine fact that his destiny is immortal.

The resurrection of Christ shed over this great truth a fresh and vivid light, fitted to dissipate forever the shadows, clouds and darkness which had rested upon the subject. They who have risen with Christ, are surrounded with the light which he poured over this field of inquiry; and in that light they walk with unwavering confidence—nay *assurance* in respect to the soul's immortality. They no more question its truth and reality, than they do the reality of present existence. In the exercise of faith, they have, at times, a precious foretaste of the blessedness connected with that future state of being for which they are making earnest and diligent preparation. In the lofty aspirations of a regenerated nature they ascend the ladder of Jacob's vision, whose top rested against the foot of the eternal throne—till they obtain an entrancing prospect of the bright realms of immortality. The voice that echoes from the heavenly oracle is clear and solemn; "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." "This mortal must put on immortality."

"Beyond the verge of infinite space,
The immortal soul of man shall live again;
Live where its glories never more may wane,
And where its nobler memories will efface
All thoughts which rend the solemn pall away
That shrouds the meanness of its primal clay."

They only who have risen with Christ to the higher life of religious faith, feel, in full force, the conviction of immortality, —they only taste the bud which shall bloom in glory beyond the skies.

II. The *agencies* concerned in effecting this spiritual resurrection.

An effect, whether in the physical or the moral world, ever suggests the idea of an adequate cause. And the cause is a subject which often awakens curiosity and inquiry. The causes or agencies concerned in the production of given effects may be ascertained as facts, when the *mode of operation* is too recondite for investigation. We may ascertain what agency is employed in the production of an effect when we can have no idea of the way in which it operates. Certain effects are directly traced to the agency of magnetism; but how this agency produces the result witnessed, is an unsolved mystery.

The resurrection of Christ is a historic fact; and as an effect it was produced by some mysterious and mighty cause. That cause is represented as a Divine energy. The body of Christ, from which the spirit had departed and in which physical life was extinct, could retain in itself no re-producing element competent to its resurrection. There was a foreign agency concerned in this stupendous event, and that agency was God's. The apostle Peter ascribes it to the agency of the Omnipotent: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." The fact that the resurrection of Christ is sometimes ascribed to the power of God the Father, and sometimes to himself, shows that there is such unity between the Father and the Son, that the power of the one is identical with the power of the other.

The *spiritual* resurrection of the believer is an effect for which we must seek an adequate and appropriate cause. There is an efficient *agency*, and an appropriate *instrumentality*. The nature of the effect produced and the manner in which it is described by the sacred writers, clearly indicate a superhuman agency. No one rises from the death of sin to the life of religion by any efforts of his own, except as such efforts are made effectual by the co-operating agency of the Holy Spirit. Reference to one or two passages will be sufficient to determine the nature of the agency concerned in the spiritual resurrection of the believer. Addressing Christians of Ephesus, Paul says, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The agent here spoken of is expressly mentioned in the following passage:—"God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." The fact is here noticed, that it is the agency of God which is exerted as the efficient cause of the new life imparted to the believer. He hath quickened us together with Christ. The resurrection of Christ is treated by the apostle as having an intimate relation to the restoration of spiritual life to the believer—the latter event being dependent on, or connected with, the former. "As Christ was dead," says a popular commentator, "but was made alive by God's power, and awakened and set on God's throne, so has God with Christ made alive, awakened and transferred to the heavenly state, those who were dead through their sins." "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The apostle in another place refers to "the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." The main thing which Paul illustrates in the first and second chapters of his epistle to the Ephesians, is the power which God has manifested in renewing and saving his people. The leading idea is, that the same power is evinced in the work, which was required to raise up the Lord Jesus from the dead.

From these explicit statements it is evident, that in the spiritual resurrection of the believer a Divine agency is employed, and that no other agency is competent to such a work. The work of spiritual resurrection by a Divine agency was recognized under the ancient dispensation. The vision of dry bones as represented by Ezekiel, may be viewed as symbolizing the manner of the believer's restoration to the higher life of religion. The prophet proclaimed the word of God, and there followed a movement among the dry bones. They came together, bone to his bone. The sinews and flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them. But there was as yet no breath in them. Then, in answer to prayer, the Spirit's life-giving breath came into them, and they lived. Here there is recognized a preliminary instrumentality, as being connected with the event. There was the prophet's dispensation of God's message, and this was followed with prayer. " Come, O breath, and breathe upon the dead." Human and Divine agency were both concerned in this symbolic resurrection. So are the same agencies recognized in the Gospel, as exerted in the spiritual resurrection of which Christians are subjects. An instrumentality has been provided, adapted to the work, the use of which is as necessary as is the agency of the Divine Spirit. The Spirit does not effectually operate except in connection with the appropriate instrumentality ; and the use of the instrumentality will avail nothing without the Spirit. This instrumentality is found in religious truth as revealed in the Scriptures ; and the ministry is one of the agencies constituted for applying it to the work to be accomplished.

Nor is this all the agency that is concerned in the work. In addition to the Spirit's influence, and the application of truth by the ministry, there is man's own activity. He is not so acted upon in being raised from spiritual death as to supersede the appropriate exertions, of which, as a free moral agent, he is capable, and for which he is held responsible.

III. The *susceptibility* to the attraction of heaven of which the new-born soul is conscious.

" If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The idea is clearly implied that such conduct will follow as the result of a resurrection to the higher life of religion. When one is by birth introduced into this world, he soon begins to feel the attractive power of its objects. This is true of infancy, which has its little world of attractions. It is so with childhood, and with youth, and with manhood. In the transition from one condition to another, new objects are presented, and new attractive forces are experienced in view of them.

When the dead spirit is made a subject of the spiritual resurrection, being raised with Christ, new objects are brought into the field of moral vision possessed of peculiar and powerful attractions, which appeal to the renovated soul with resistless charms. These things above, are what the Gospel reveals as blessed verities pertaining to the heavenly state. It is sufficient to remark in respect to them, that they include whatever is essential to a condition of perfect happiness. In specifying some of these things we mention perfect *freedom from sin*, and its guilty stains. Sin is the curse that blights humanity, and the cause of our fears and calamities.

> " Guilt is the source of sorrow; 'tis the fiend
> The avenging fiend—that follows us behind,
> With whips and stings: the blest know none of this;
> But rest in everlasting peace of mind,
> And find the height of all their heaven is goodness."

Eternal freedom from sin and guilt, and the enjoyment of the peace with which it is connected, is one of the attractive things for which the Christian waits and longs. There is no deliverance from the storms of suffering and trial, which so often darken and disturb the scenes of our earthly pilgrimage. No barriers we may erect by the aid of our fortunes, our friendships, or our virtues, can protect us from those evils which a wise God visits upon his children, as the needful discipline of the spirit that it may be purified for its heavenly condition. The peace of this condition shall be as a river, whose calm surface shall never be lashed with the tempest—its onward flow never obstructed by adverse obstacle.

Among the things above whose attractions appeal to the renewed soul, is *a mansion in that temple*, whose worshippers will serve God day and night before his throne—whence there shall beam on them the radiance of a Father's love. " They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." O what a contrast between the things above, which attract the affections of him who has experienced the power of a spiritual resurrection; and the things on earth, which attract with such fatal fascination the worldly-minded. There, the communion and fellowship of redeemed spirits will not be disturbed by the outbursts of jealousy and unkindness, or by the lamentable inconsistencies so often witnessed in the church below. There, certainty of knowledge will preclude all error, delusion and doubt. Here we know only in part; but there shall we know as we are known. There shall be solved the mysteries which pained and perplexed us during the pilgrimage of life.

Raised with Christ to the privileges and honors of such a resurrection, it is manifest how believers are exalted to heavenly places, where they may have a clear and ravishing vision of those things above, whose matchless attractions must appeal with power to every pious heart. These things which mortal eye hath not seen, may be so contemplated with the eye of faith, that the soul shall be absorbed with their spiritual beauties, and supernal glories. How reasonable the counsel of our text,—"if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above"—open your heart to the full power of their attractions—let them withdraw you wholly from the treacherous vanities of earth.

"Thrice happy world, where gilded toys
No more disturb our thoughts, no more pollute our joys!
  There light or shade no more succeed by turns,
There reigns the eternal sun with an unclouded ray,
There all is calm as night, yet all immortal day,
  And truth forever shines, and love forever burns."

Does any one ask,—in what consist those attractions, which draw the regenerate spirit upward with such power and pleasure? The answer is obvious:—the attracting elements of that world are *purity* and *charity*. There will be experienced no annoying consciousness of imperfection, — no hankering after forbidden pleasures—no repinings awakened by the painful mysteries of providence. Every heart is pure; and in its purity it can enjoy God. There, too, is the reign of heaven-born charity,—that charity which the apostle has described with a spirit bathed in unearthly elements,—with a pen dipped in the tints of the rainbow which hangs its arch of glory over the throne of the Lamb. No germ of selfishness opens there its lurid and offensive blossoms; no petty rivalries and jealousies create discordant tones in the heavenly anthem; no pride sets up its narrow-souled pretensions; no breath of scandal taints the air of paradise; no unkind breezes create a ripple in the river of pleasure, which waters and refreshes the heavenly fields—All is love, joy, peace, unalloyed—uninterrupted—unending.

From the foregoing remarks it follows that a conscious susceptibility to the attraction of things above, is a *distinct element of Christian character*. The new-born spirit, having risen with Christ, naturally seeks heavenly objects, attracted by their transcendent worth and loveliness. They offer to the mind objects fitted to satisfy its largest cravings and loftiest aspirations. Worldly minds feel and obey the force of a downward gravitation. But it is not so—so it cannot be with the spiritual mind. If risen with Christ, its aspirations will be heavenward. Impeded the Christian may be by the counteracting tendencies of indwelling sin, and the allurements of the world, in his efforts to maintain his upward way, and keep his affections on things above. But risen with Christ, he will feel the impulses of a heavenward tendency, bearing his soul upward as on the eagle's wing, where it may enjoy communion with the unrivalled objects of the New Jerusalem.

Whoever is conscious of being uninterested in those things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God ; or conscious of being more strongly interested by worldly objects, amusements and pleasures than by the attractions of heaven, may conclude that he has never experienced the power of a spiritual resurrection. I submit the solemn question to your common sense : whether the man who has risen with Christ to the possession of that higher life which the Holy Spirit breathes into the soul, will be captivated with the ephemeral, delusive, ensnaring attractions of worldly objects, or worldly amusements ? Will such a man seek his pleasure on the enchanted ground of sin and Satan ? Will he relish the absorbing excitements and brilliant follies of the ball-room ; or the theatre with its imposing exhibitions, or the sporting saloon with its revelry and perilous indulgences ?

Tell me not that a soul which has experienced the power of a spirtual resurrection can be charmed with the attraction of such things, instead of being captivated with the sublime realities and glories which Jesus has revealed. No—its aspirations must be heavenward, and kindling with the heavenly fires of its original constitution, it will seek its native realm above the skies. It cannot relish the pleasures of sin, after having tasted the joys of that higher sphere to which it is introduced by its spiritual birth. Risen with Christ, you will set your affections on things above, and hold sweet communion with heavenly realities.

The subject is commended to your earnest attention, Christian brethren, as one whose faithful application will furnish a searching test of character. Can you bear the application, and come forth from the trial of your experience and your hopes, rejoicing in the assurance that you have indeed risen with Christ to the undying activities and elevated pleasures of the new and higher life of faith and charity ? If so, then are you dead to sin, its pleasures, friendships and pursuits. And more—you are alive unto God, his service, his honor and his kingdom. The standard which the text proposes is elevated ; but you must walk by it or renounce the hope that you have risen with Christ. He must live in you—in you his spirit must dwell, or you cannot be his disciple.

SERMON DXCI.

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE GROG-SHOP.

Till the whole was leavened.—MATT. xiii. 33.

THESE are the words of Him who saw the end in the beginning. Looking to that end he lived, and died to live again. We, looking to the same end, shall travel in his footsteps; and whether living or dying, we shall be his, and like him.—"Till the whole is leavened!" It should be the motto of every individual Christian in his efforts to conquer the sin that rules in his own soul: and the maxim of every Christian community in its warfare of love against the evil infesting that community; and the watchword of the Church universal militant against the world of iniquity. It becomes us to act in view of that which is the real and true object of all our labor; not in view of false or even of partial ones. These may lead us astray—but that one, never. The sailor in northern seas who guides himself altogether by the floating ice-islands, or the temporary channels between them, will miss his way. He must pursue the pole star. So the Christian must hold his eye upon the one great object of his striving, and this is that "the whole be leavened."

The child in his thoughtlessness, loiters on his path; gathers flowers, stops to listen to the babbling brooks, pauses to pluck berries here, and there goes chasing after a singing bird, or a butterfly. Thus the child: but the *man*, more wise, pushes straight on toward his object. A diversity of little transitory motives coming in succession, enfeebles and distracts the soul. One great motive makes it strong and self-accordant. These narrower objects but partially rouse a part of our energies. A single great one, blending the forces of all in one glorious and thrilling unity, penetrates the centre of the soul with its fiery magnetism, and stirs the depths, the home of the harmonies, and we act with all the forces of our being, all awake and all accordant.

Let no one, then, propose to himself his own salvation, merely, and nothing more: "He that saveth his life shall lose it." Nor let this church propose to itself merely to be a prosperous church. We are not "to seek our own" exclusively; and if we do, we seek in vain. Nor is it enough that as individuals and as a church we aim to become instrumental in Divine hands, for the conversion of those immediately about us, and suffer our minds to dwell on that object alone. Our word should be, not till these and those be leavened, but "till the *whole* is leavened."

And what, my brethren, is to man, the whole? Are we to say the whole town or city?—the whole country?—the whole continent? No!—but the whole WORLD! The day shall come when all nations shall be united together in one great realm, the kingdom of God: when his pure laws shall be honored in all decrees and systems of legislation; when the principles upon which our Lord Jesus Christ founded his divine life, shall be the ruling principles at once of all individual, and of all national life; when the spirit of Jesus shall find a home in all the families of the earth, and the morning light *as it falls upon* meridian after meridian, and advances *from region to region of continent* or island-sprinkled ocean, shall awaken amid the incense-breathing fields, and the song of many happy creatures, the voice also of human praise, and the incense of prayer from household altars: evening, too, shall renew the same in softer voices and all things that have breath shall thank the Lord. We are coming to that day! This is not poetry—it is prophecy. The time is coming! We can see it on its way. The hills have—many of them—already been made low, and the vallies filled. *He* is coming who "shall rule the world in righteousness, and the people with his truth." We may indeed not live here to see it—but we shall see it! And we may labor for it now, may hold it in our eye, may drink in the strength which the vision gives, and, filled with the glory of it, may walk in its light. There is no night to them to whom the Lamb giveth light.

Fastening our eyes therefore upon this great object, drawing deep breaths of determination and of quiet joy—permitting soul and body to fill with the sacred warmth, and the new energy which run throughout our being as we gaze—*thus* may we wisely judge of our present course, and decide upon particular duties: only thus. For we must act in view of a great object, of the whole object, of the true object.

Let us reason a little in view of this. Our purpose is to Christianize the world. We have already begun to labor specifically for that high end. The world is open before us Our laborers have gone forth to their toil. But how? Is it not needful that we christianize our own people, while seeking to subject other nations to the truth? Is it possible to carry that great work to perfection while this at home lingers tardily? Will not resources fail—cease to be adequate to the ever growing emergency? Or may not even the spirit of Christian enthusiasm in our own community, be secretly perverted by slow unbelief? Must we not go on from conquering to conquer here, if we would hope to extend, or even maintain our conquests abroad? There can be but one answer to this momentous question. Looking to the christianization of the world, every heart replies, Our own people must be thoroughly pervaded, in all ranks, classes, sects, parties, divisions, with the sacred element of the Christian spirit, and of Christian truth.

Now, therefore, there is another great object which we must propose to ourselves, lesser than the first, indeed, and preparative to it, its "forerunner," yet great. It is—*the Christianization of this entire American people*; not of its best educated, and most refined portion, but of its *great masses*. Yes, that must be done. It can be done. It can be done soon if Christians will but faithfully try. We may, possibly, within a few years, hear something from Ireland, which shall make plain to us the ease with which a nation may be subjected to christian influences, when Christians are in earnest. And we need not look beyond the sea, if we will only look beyond death and time—to God; for when we do that, do we not know, in our heart of hearts, my brethren, that this thing can be done? The truth is, it has never yet been tried. Denominations, indeed, have been pushing themselves, and often with great energy, and sometimes with shameful differences, and in a spirit of rivalry, or vulgar arrogance, such as makes good men blush. A noble society, likewise, now grown to be an object of reverent love to all our hearts, has these many days been casting its bread upon the waters, and sowing wide its seeds of light. But notwithstanding all this, never yet, as I believe, have the American churches, or any considerable portion of them, engaged, with an adequate appreciation at once of the greatness—of the necessity—and of the feasibility of the work, in the enterprise of making this nation a thoroughly *Christian* people in all its ranks, and through all its mass. In every large town, through sparsely settled regions of the country, and most of all, in the garrets and cellars of our crowded cities, there are hundreds and thousands unaffected, and almost untouched by any worthy religious influence.

Here then, is a work which must be done; and it will be done. God knoweth how; and he will teach us how, so soon as we are sincerely *ready to learn* and to do.

The time is coming, when this [illegible] stretching from sea to sea, and from polar snows to torrid heats, looking eastward upon Europe, mother of arts and of arms, and westward, over the thousand islands of the peaceful sea to those eldest empires whose history almost antedates the age of fable—motionless beneath the weight of their thronging millions enfolding a third part of earth's sons, and torpid as the reptile that has slept a thousand years within the stone—this nation, the mediator, thus between two worlds, and awakening both with its youthful shout and song —gathering with its two hands the commerce of the earth, cherishing within its own affluent bosom, its hundreds of millions, free, intelligent, and happy—this mightiest and noblest people that time hath known, *shall be the people of the Lord.* Just laws within and a generous policy toward all without, private probity and public honor, the splendors of honest wealth, the dignities of noble worth and station, the graceful accomplishments of refined society, consummate victories of intellect and soul in the wonders of art, in scientific triumphs, and the glorious achievements of literature, the magnificence of national power, the thrilling glow of great memories, and of sublime hopes, the grateful homage of living and of departed worth, the exaltation of spirit with which the soul grasps mighty truths, and appropriates grand purposes, the delights of benevolence, the domestic bliss of pious homes, the sweet intercourse of love and friendship,—all the wide-spread and peaceful glories, and victories, and bounties and beauties, and benevolences that make the wonderful charm of the Christian spirit in all the domain of human action and experience—the Faith that conquers death, the Hope that hath the foretaste of heaven, the Charity that is the "greatest of these"—in one word—the broad sunlight of God shed upon the heart, and flooding all its chambers—these blessings shall unite here, and in them all shall man rejoice, and God be glorified.

To the final achievement of this grand result, then, as subordinated to one grander still, are we called upon to live and work. All motives of patriotism, of philanthropy, and of religion, combine to establish us in this high aim, and to awaken our profoundest enthusiasm in the great resolve —*That the American People, in all its classes, and throughout its whole mass, shall become in the subtilest* essence of its spirit, in the predominant qualities of its character, and in the outgoings of its life, a truly *Christian people.*

Holding still in view the two great objects already mentioned, and in the light of our purpose, judging—let us further inquire whether *We*, the Christians, (or persons who ought to be Christians,) in this community—whether *we*, in *particular*, have not a *third* great object to gain, lesser than the other two indeed, yet great and conducive to their attainment. We propose to ourselves that the masses of the American people be permeated with the Christian spirit—do we not? But *where* are we? and where is our influence most powerful? Where may our labors be made to tell most directly and effectively? Where is our *work-field?* Where, but here at home, in our own community, among our own churches, in our own streets, with our own neighbors, through our own local government, and the social agencies which exist or may be created *here?* And do we not know that the example of our large cities is potent throughout the land? and that what one does, others are likely to imitate? and that a a noble stand for righteousness taken in any of these is felt in all? The influence flashes with lightning speed, from one great center to another, travels like a tidal wave along the shores and up navigable streams, rushes on iron roads outstripping the wind—touches soon the mighty national heart, which though you cannot find the place of it, quivers, yet, with each vibration throughout the whole body, and sends its vital magnetism to the remotest fibre, and the minutest particle.

Is there not then a *third* great object before us? What is it? I am sure that I interpret your own thoughts when I say—It is—*thoroughly to christianize this city.* This, indeed, is a more difficult work, than to half-accomplish the same result in a community many times as large: but it is also a nobler work, and would prove in the end a more significant and important achievement. For there are thousands of communities in Christendom that have been partially subjected to religious influences;

but nowhere in any land, can a city of a hundred thousand, or even of fifty thousand inhabitants be found, where all classes and ranks are in the main controlled by the Christian spirit. In all the world there is not *one!* And now, our nation suffers for want of such an example. A world buried in sin cries out for it: and we may be sure, my fellow-citizens, and my fellow-Christians, that its cry is heard of him who giveth recompense both to the faithful and to the unfaithful. O for one large city, where vice is ashamed and hides its head, and is pining in secret and dying out! where criminal poverty is unknown, and idleness is a stranger, and profanity does not taint the public air, and drunken shouts and ribaldry are never heard! where rich and poor dwell together in mutual charity; and where personal honor, and a high probity are the rule, and not the exception; where demagogues can find no fools to flatter, and politicians do not stoop that they may conquer, and Christians love one another without jealousy, and unite always in bearing each others' burthens, and fulfilling the law of Christ, and doing the Master's work! O for a city overshadowed by righteousness, and honor, and purity, and peace, filled with high enterprize, and religious courage, with magnanimous sympathies and instincts, with the manifold impulses of a humane and godly enthusiasm, with the invincible strength of Christian faith, with the divine light of love! O for *one* such city in the wide earth! Let there be *one* such, and it shall fill the world with its leaven! That will be a happy day, not for ourselves alone, but for all nations, tongues, and languages, for every wild tribe upon mountain, or sandy waste, for every decaying realm enervated by corruption, a day of glad tidings and of great joy to universal human kind, when *one* such city shall let its light shine. Be it ours to labor and to endure, that, by the grace of God, our city may become that blessed one. Thankfully we take the purpose to our hearts, to make this, our home, a fountain of gladness to the whole earth. Wherever our lot may hereafter be cast, whether in the great metropolis or in some secluded hamlet of the country, let the same religious aim inspire our efforts and dictate our plans.

But let us see what is *practicable*. We do not wish to be the dupes of imagination. We would present to our minds a definite, and a feasible object. What plan and what endeavor does our duty now force upon us?

I claim, my hearers, THAT WE OUGHT TO SET BEFORE OURSELVES, AS AN IMMEDIATE, ATTAINABLE END, THE SUBSTANTIAL CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE MASSES OF THIS COMMUNITY.

But how much is involved in this? A few words will explain. Obviously, we do not mean to affirm the probability of the immediate conversion of the whole community to living and practical godliness. In what sense, then, do we presume to declare that the "*mass* of this community can very soon be substantially christianized."

In this sense: 1. That the great practical principles of the Christian religion *may* be made and *ought* to be made clearly and strongly *predominant* here; so that they should be respected even by those who hate them; outwardly observed by those who have no inward love for them, and universally recognized as obligatory, even by such as refuse obedience; the prominent, clear, acknowledged rules of all public, as of all private life among all classes of the people. At present, religious principle must succumb, it would seem, to everything! Does political expediency mark out a line of policy that is inconsistent with the Christian law? our politicians —not indeed without an awkward bow before the majesty of religion—do yet, for that *once*, turn from her and walk in the way that "seemeth good" to them. Does the merchant find that a temporary interest demands a degree of deceit, and cunning management? the "eternal principle," must, for that *once*, be compromised, or ignored: the emergency must be yielded to. Are any follies fashionable, are any sins profitable to the *purse, countenanced* by social, by commercial, or political influence? then *the preacher may* not mention these—still, for this once, the majesty of religion *must be decently* veiled! Real wrongs, particular crimes, are not *to be dealt with;* but only sin in the abstract, and transgression in general:

—and *so*, again and again and again, the clear demands of the law of God, the will of the Eternal must defer to, so called, expediency, to interest, and even to mere personal and factitious respectability—must stand one side, with meek brow uncovered, and let these great ones pass! I do not say that this is universally the fact; and would fain believe that it is not generally so: but certainly, we meet with, and we hear of such things very often.

Now, I maintain that all this should cease: should cease soon. Religion should be enthroned, the one only supreme—the universal authority. In this sense of the phrase, then, ought we to labor for the immediate christianization of the mass of the community.

2. In this further sense, also: viz: that all classes be brought under *stated religious influences.*

Now, there are thousands going wide, unaffected by any regular means of spiritual instruction. That religious influences may be efficient, they must be frequent, and must recur at fixed seasons. A tract, now and then, an occasional word of counsel, a sermon heard, by chance, once in a month, or in six months—very little dependence can be placed upon instrumentalities so desultory as these! We have no right, my brethren—before God, and before our fellow-man—no right to leave any class of our population so grossly uncared for. It is clearly our duty, immediately to provide stated religious privileges that shall reach the unbelieving, the untaught, the falsely taught, and every degraded, every desolate, despairing soul among us. If the people will not come to the gospel, the gospel must be carried to the people.

This, then, is a second step to be taken toward the substantial christianization of the people.

3. The *schools of vice should be closed,* and all open, gross profligacy should be repressed.

This would, evidently, be but a necessary concomitant of the full acknowledgment of the supremacy of religion. For such things are permitted, and can be permitted, only, where almost anything takes precedence of the law of God. No Christian community can allow them without deserting its principles and betraying its Lord. *We* allow them, my brethren; and in this we are false to our own souls, false to our neighbor, and to God.

4. Christians should be more scrupulously faithful in *specific Christian labors,* and in *all duty.* Let them insist upon the Divine Authority, the dignity and expediency of their principles; plant their feet immovably upon the basis of *right,*—and wisely dividing amongst themselves the labor to be done, let them immediately proceed to occupy the whole field, and let them hold it, till the time of harvest and of rest.

5. As a consequence of all these things, *larger* and *better accessions* would be made to the number of the professed disciples of Christ.

By the christianization of the mass of the community is meant then, the accomplishment of these five things:—the enthronement of Christian principle as the *highest law*—the extension of stated religious influences to *all*—the shutting up of the *public schools* of vice, and the repression of open, gross profligacy—an *increased* and more *systematic* industry of good men in Christian labors—and as a consequence, a corresponding *increase* in their numbers.

This is the object which we ought to set before ourselves as immediately attainable. But what is meant by immediately? This—that we ought at once to enter systematically upon this work, with a sure faith in its speedy accomplishment; resolved that by the grace of God, any obstacles to the contrary notwithstanding, it shall be *done.*

But is this feasible? Is there any practicable method of bringing it about? We have no right to represent a serious enterprise, even to our own minds, *in unreal and extravagant* coloring; but must, in all things, *hold fast upon truth and reality.* Is this undertaking feasible, in our own day, or must it be left to future generations?

Upon this question of practicability, I remark—

I. No community can *ever* become pervaded with the Christian spirit *so long as it endures public schools of vice, and open gross profligacy.*

Religion cannot be crowned with supreme authority, and enthroned in public reverence, so long as irreligion is openly vaunting itself, publicly attacking and secretly undermining that authority, and that reverence. The community which looks upon gross immorality running riot in her streets, without making resolute specific endeavors to put it down, can lay no claim to the spirit of Christ, and is not worthy the name of a God-fearing people. Whatever the character of individuals in it may be, however pure, however high, still, as a society, it does not fear God; does not love man; is neither righteous nor wise, nor in any Christian or truly human judgment, respectable. For the things that are pure and good, and the men that are faithful and just, alone are worthy of our honor and affection. A community that has not conscience enough to rebuke and sternly resist the open assaults of outrageous vice, cannot be held in veneration by any true and thoughtful soul. My brethren, it is impossible! Can such a soul be deluded into the fancy, that a community which regards gross iniquity as a venial thing, an enemy to be treated with, an evil to be endured—is yet conscientiously careful of lesser matters, and at heart a Christian society? There may be Christian men in it, and many Christian influences; but, manifestly, these men are not the ones who give it character; nor do these influences control it. Can we expect such a society to add to its faith, virtue; to its virtue, knowledge, brotherly kindness, charity; to become in its members "a partaker of the divine nature?" Can we for a moment, imagine that the mass of this society is in *any* sense "christianized," or can become so—that it is advancing toward Christian perfection, or can advance, so long as it does, in its capacity of a social body and a body politic, permit an open, gross vice, which publicly, socially, and privately, is acknowledged to be gross, and abominable—permit this vice, not only to continue, in the main, unmolested, but even to be continually infused into the habits of the young, by incessant *public* example, solicitation, and almost by force—thus to be making daily progress, while thousands of criminals, and thousands of paupers are annually dragged thereby to almshouse and to prison, and thousands of unhappy wives are given over to a slow death in sore toil, and heart-breakings—and thousands upon thousands of poor, neglected children are left to grow up in ignorance, and sin, to become the pest of society, and the peril of the State! The Christians here would Christianize the whole mass of this community! Is there any reliance to be put upon such professions, while these Christians do not so much as try to make it a decently moral community? Is it agreeable with reason, and common sense, that those who are not moved at the daily contemplation of open wickedness, should be so very sensitive to inferior faults; to more refined and less destructive sins?—that those should be filled with grief in view of the general depravity of human nature, who meet every day some of the worst developments of this corruption, and pass coolly by "on the other side?" There is but one answer to these questions: in short, we have no reason to expect that this city will be thoroughly christianized, until we see that at least *gross* vice is thoroughly hated. Men never climb to the top of a mountain, till they have passed the limits of its base. This community will not ascend the holy heights of Zion, till, at least, it has left that valley of Hinnom, where it has been offering, so long, its sons and its daughters to Moloch—till it cease to yield them to these infernal fires. My brethren, it is necessary that your Christian principle should decide all *great* questions; then, possibly, it may come to decide *all* questions. But if you neglect the weightier matters of the law, then your laying tithes upon mint, anise and cummin, is but a mere matter of tradition or of hypocrisy; has no virtue in it, and will do little or no good. If you *are the enemies of* sin, prove your enmity upon those sins that are most *fatal.* *If you* are consecrated to the service of God, do not omit your service *exactly* there, where it is most needed. Having gone into his vineyard *to labor,* do not content yourself with pulling the comparatively harmless weeds, while you leave the inveterate brambles, long embedded in the soil, to grow, and toughen, and extend—secretly rooting out the vines—openly casting deadly shade upon them, and breathing mildew and decay.

These counsels, I am sure, do at once approve themselves to your reason and conscience. But no one can compel you to *obey* your reason and your conscience. Let us remember, my brethren, that *God judgeth us*.

We have now seen, how upon general principles of common sense, a community cannot become *pervaded* with the Christian spirit, so long as it quietly endures the presence of public schools of vice, and of a gross, open profligacy. We have seen how that according to laws of human nature which we instinctively apprehend, it is impossible for such a people to make advances in spiritual things. Scattered individuals may,—the people cannot. We have seen how there is even a contradiction in terms, in supposing a society which is lukewarm in its concern for the most palpable and greatest interests to be really zealous for such as are less open and less impressive; and therefore that such lukewarmness is really an evidence of a lack of the essential principle of Christianity. It must be so. For the Church is not ignorant. It does not want for facts. It wants a will: it wants warmth of purpose; it wants *love*—in the absence of which all other things profit nothing.

But even if this were not so—if its present condition were all that any could pray for—if every heart was glowing, and every hand restless to engage in holy work,—even then, the quiet endurance of schools of vice, and of open profligacy would be enough to cool off all this love, and annihilate all this zeal.

He who stands by, and silently looks on while an evil thing is done, is almost a partaker in the sin; and always of necessity a partaker *of* it. His soul receives a taint; and a seed is dropped within it, mixed of the elements of imbecility and of corruption. It is dangerous to look on an evil, without hating it. For gradually the conscience becomes familiarized with its form, and familiarity diminishes aversion. At first, the soul abhorred the iniquity; but it checked the expression of its abhorrence—did wrong unto itself by neglecting to act or to utter its own deep conviction; and so, the evil that the soul looked upon, made a mark upon the soul; left a stain, a plague-spot there,—and this not the first time only, but the second time also, and the third, and every time that the evil was witnessed, unrebuked. If then, we dwell permanently in the presence of open and bold corruption, permanently repressing our feeling and ever neglecting to act against the evil, there is a permanent taint, ever renewed and renewed again—made deeper, made wider every day; until, at last, our condition comes to be—that of a large portion of this community, my brethren—a condition of careless insensibility to the evil, or perhaps even of absolute fondness for it, and possibly of hopeless subjection to its power. Not only, therefore, is it true that the Church cannot purify the world while itself sitting quietly down beneath the shadow of gross iniquity; but it cannot retain its own purity. There is no safety in such a truce There is no hope for the Church unless it breaks every such unholy peace, and maintains an incessant struggle, at the very least, against those forms of depravity which are gross and public. We must be true to our own souls, my brethren, if we would not have our own souls grow false. Thus our highest interest, and the very necessity of our spiritual life demands, that we refuse to have this sin forced upon us.

But even if this were not so—could there be any greater folly than for men engaged in a noble work, to remain at peace with those who are successfully opposing that work?—to disregard agencies, which on every side are thwarting and even anticipating their own efforts? Here are some fifty organizations, we *will suppose*, of professing Christians, who say, and who sincerely believe that they are striving to fill this community with the Christian spirit, and to turn these thousands of souls to God. Now is it possible, that while sincerely laboring for this, the highest end which either created beings, or the Creator himself can have—for an object which involves all other good objects, and is itself the best of all—can it be possible, that they are neglecting to oppose those very agencies which are the most efficient, and which are fearfully efficient, in counteracting all their efforts, and making void all their solicitude and toil! Yet this is precisely what the churches *are* doing! What should we say of a general commissioned for the defence and deliverance of his country, who should employ his forces in arresting thieves, smugglers, and highwaymen, but should pay little or no attention to a powerful invading army, which, besides creating three-fourths of all these thieves and robbers, was itself the greatest of all—burning villages, and sacking cities, and making the land desolate? What should we say of the physician, who being called to prescribe for a man that had poisoned himself, should amuse his patient with drugs for this pain and that, with liniments for one weakness and another, with anodynes and with irritants, with depletives, and tonics, and stimulants, and the whole "what not" of the materia medica, but should let him take the poison still? If *we*, then, permit those whose good we are seeking, to be tempted and seduced to the very sin which is most fruitful of sin, and the most potent enemy of all kinds of improvement, are not we, I ask, at once unwise and unfaithful? Is it possible that we should succeed?

But all will be well, says one, if we can but have a revival of religion. I remark, therefore—

II. It is hardly *possible* that we should have a genuine and general revival of spiritual religion, at once intelligent and healthy, *until we are ready to do our duty in regard to public and gross profligacy.*

Tell me, my brethren, what mean you by a "revival?" A mere excitement? That is not the thing. A passing excitement is not what you wish!—but this:—You want a reinvigoration of the Christian spirit:—do you not?—of Christian love, Christian conscience, Christian humility, Christian readiness to yield the body up "a living sacrifice," in holy labor and endurance unto God. This is what we understand by a true "revival." It is only such an excitement that we value: and there is no reason why a revival like this might not last forever. It would, certainly, have its fluctuations, but, in all probability, if once fully embodied in decisive and permanent public action, it would endure to the end of time, proving itself to be a genuine exaltation of the vital energy of the spiritual life in society, a positive and an immortal growth. This would indeed be a "revival" worth praying for, and if need be, worth dying for! a re-vival, a new life developed, that should never die. *This* is what we desire.

We will suppose, then, that the consciences of the good men in our community are awakened and freshly sensitive; that warm hearts which had been crusted over with worldliness, are now broken anew, and glow, and move themselves, tremulous with heat and energy, melting in sacred love, ready to flow, ready to bear the whole accumulaed force of the soul's deepest action forth upon the world. Now the community being in such a state is in exactly that state wherein it will not passively endure the continual assaults of open corruption. So long as it submits unconcernedly to these aggressions, its lethargy remains unbroken; and it can hardly by possibility be revived, without rousing from this fatal and dishonorable passivity to clear and decisive action. These two events must come at the same moment. When the Spirit of God touches our hearts, we shall awaken to our duty and do it. So whenever we shall try to put ourselves in the line of duty, we may reasonably trust that the Holy Ghost has excited, and will also sustain and promote our efforts, and that our whole being will be filled with the energy of the new fire from heaven.

It is almost a moral impossibility, that the churches should experience the blessing of a genuine revival so long as they wilfully neglect any plain and urgent duty. But what duty more plain, or more imperative than this? The impenitent heart that wilfully persists in known sin cannot hope for renewal. The imperfect Christian who clings with fond attachment to any wrong habit, knowing it to be wrong, or holds back from any arduous duty when the obligation is clear, cannot expect to grow in grace. So the churches which behold iniquity surrounding them—gross, open, and vulnerable, cannot surely hope for a revival while neglecting to assail that iniquity. They may have a transitory return of morbid and unintelligent enthusiasm; an excitement which may not be wanting indeed in its good results; they may have an important revival in a few hearts, for a short time; but it is *not possible* for them to enjoy anything which shall rise to the dignity, or shall work out the results of a thoughtful, deep, genuine, and general revival of spiritual religion.

Our community is one body, my brethren. No great event can happen in any part of it without affecting the other parts. Neither any section, nor any class can make important advances *alone*. The head may not say to the foot, I care not for thee! nor the hand to the eye, I have no need of thee! Not even a single church and congregation can take any decisive step, or make any important progress without affecting the common interests of the whole body. We may, in the main, reason of any one community, as we would reason of an individual. The same great laws regulate its moral and spiritual progress. The same high justice, pure, and stern, sits in judgment upon all its proceedings. A like awful recompense is visited upon its sin. A like glorious crown rewards its fidelity.

Every public act re-acts upon the public conscience, and leaves its impress on the public character; and this controls the public destiny. If the laws are just and administered righteously, they tend to establish in the popular heart a reverence for justice and fidelity. If the laws are lax, or if they be administered in a loose or unprincipled manner; if enactments are made to serve private ends; if legislation, instead of being a reflection of the will of God—a translation into particulars of his holy law, becomes the tool of partizans, and of contractors; then are the people instructed in all manner of injustice and unfaithfulness; the public sentiment is corrupted, the popular conscience is debased: and pray, what is the "popular conscience" but the consciences of the individuals that make up the people. Yes, each individual soul receives the seed that the government is sowing in its acts of legislation and its course of policy. The principles which constitute the basis of these, will inevitably become the principles of an exceedingly large portion of the community. And now, can any city or town that is so morally dead as to endure meekly the pestilent example of a base government, the steady growth of pauperism and crime, the continual multiplication of public schools of iniquity—can any community, while remaining in this state, and voluntarily and obstinately insensible to the awful wickedness and peril of it, experience a genuine and general revival of spiritual religion? If you found your neighbor grossly unjust in the most important matters, openly mean, and avowedly selfish, a harborer of thieves, a companion of profligates—would you expect to find him honestly scrupulous of religious duties, and truly pious at heart? If before the world, he is boldly wicked, is he holy in secret? If then upon the open stage of its public acts the community is immoral, what sort of things will you expect to find behind the scenes, and when you come to investigate the privacy of its individual members? The community, as a whole, we will suppose, ignores the difference between right and wrong, suffers the most open and the grossest sins to pass with weak and inefficient rebuke, and makes no really earnest and vigorous effort to quell abuses and injuries which are utterly abominable and horrible. Now while such neglect is understandingly continued, is the community in its secret heart truly religious? Has it a deep reverence for God, and for his image in the human soul? Is it inwardly devoted to his glory, and to the welfare of his immortal children? Does any one believe that? But again; while the community is thus knowingly giving itself up to be debased, and supinely consenting unto sin—while remaining in this state, will it rise to new heights of spirituality, and pass through the happy stages of a genuine and general revival of religion? Remaining in this state, do you expect that it will be filled with saintly sentiments, and with godly purposes? Remaining in this state, will it abound in good works, "visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and keeping itself unspotted from the world?" Remaining in this state, will it "cease to do evil and learn to do well," "put off the old man corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, put on the new man" which is renewed after the image of him that created him, and "being followers of God as dear children"—"all come in the unity of faith and knowledge unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?' Tell me, can a sinner, remaining in a state of sin, be a saint!—the "carnal mind" "sold under sin," be "spiritually minded!" Then may *we* of this community; then may the people of this State, expect a genuine and thorough revival of spiritual religion, while remaining careless of the common decencies of morality.

Yes, indeed, do we need a revival—one that shall be deep and wide; one that shall do its work well, and shall deliver us from this crushing, poisonous load of public and private immorality which is breaking down our energies, and palsying our hope. But we cannot expect a revival while living in the neglect of known duty. And yet, without it, how can the community ever be filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ? It becomes a question of the greatest importance, therefore, under what conditions such a blessing may be rationally expected? Can it be hoped for on any terms? If not, then with religion, the cause of morality must fail, since, even if momentarily successful it can only be permanently established on a basis of religious principle. What, then, are the probabilities? Are we justified in regarding this great work of reformation as feasible?

In reply, I would remark:—

III. It is plain that a successful effort for the suppression of open, gross vice, will certainly be followed by *renewed Christian activity*.

Here, now, a great practical, moral question is put to the community, and especially to the more conscientious part of it. Its bearings upon religion and morality are made most prominent, and are set forth under the combined light of principles and of facts, of reasoning and experience. Its claims are urged from a thousand different sources; from individuals of every class, rank, condition, and, it may literally be said, of every character; for perhaps the most touching appeal of all is that which comes up from our prisons, and the dens of iniquity in our great cities. Editors, lawyers and judges, chiefs of police, wardens of prisons and penitentiaries, Christian ministers of all denominations, churches, in their individual capacity, and as represented in central assemblies, governors of states, legislatures themselves clothed with all the attributes of popular sovereignty, while the great voice of the people rolls after them in approbation and support—these all have united to present, to defend, to magnify and to urge home the claims of this question, as one which directly involves the dearest and the highest interests of morality and religion. The issue, it is impossible to avoid, to defer, or even to confuse. So prominently, so broadly, so luminously and definitely is it put, and with such tremendous weight is it pressed upon us, that we have nothing to do but to meet it. It is a question of *duty*, and can only be answered by *action*.

Now, I affirm, that when this question has been answered rightly, from the moment of the putting forth a successful effort to do this duty, there will be a renewal of Christian activity. In the first place, there is, already, a renewal in the very act of fulfilling this obligation. Is it reasonable to suppose that this reinvigoration should immediately cease upon the temporary accomplishment of a single object? Will it not rather find that the ground just gained must be *held*, as well as gained; that other points must be carried even in order that this may be maintained? on every side will there not be work demanding continued, and perhaps redoubled efforts?

My brethren, it is impossible, that when once the Christian spirit is roused among us, and has gained such a triumph as this, it should immediately go to sleep again! No—the conscience once re-enlivened, the whole spiritual being once well awake, and we should see a day of blessed labors, a day that would be memorable to all time for its rich results. The mere suppression of the outward instrumentalities of vice, and of its grossest forms wil never satisfy the sensitive conscience. It must reach the hidden seat, the germ of the evil; and having lopped off the outward deformities, and severed this great tap-root of iniquity, the roused conscience of the people would next impel them to attempt its thorough eradication from the soil of the heart, by making the heart incapable—through grace from God, given unto it—of nourishing this plant of sin. To drop the figure—good men in the community having once so far awakened to a sense of duty in regard to a single gross and open vice, would not be likely to remain content with its apparent suppression—with a merely external and superficial reform; but would be encouraged to labor for the annihilation of the sinful disposition itself, in the conversion of the heart. Every one would feel that efforts for the spiritual good of the people might now be made with some hope of success. With such a victory confidence returns; harmony is restored; a spirit of high enterprise is awakened. Let it once be seen that this citadel has been stormed, that the very basis of the hostile operations has been captured, and that, if this strong hold can be held, one great province is forever conquered from the realm of sin, one vast growth of iniquity permanently checked—and who will not feel a new courage in his heart, and a fresh enthusiasm stirring there—the prophet of greater triumphs to come. Yes! this moral victory, won in a right spirit, and by worthy means, would sound like a trumpet-call to action, within every soul that longeth, and hopeth for the redemption of the people. Ay! and it would be a trumpet-call to others too! It would proclaim within the conscious hearts of them that live by pandering to corrupt appetites, and to the passions of the populace, the condemnation which eternal Justice pronounces on their deeds. They know their guilt; and now they feel its shame; they begin to see that their time is short. Yes! for the tide of moral sentiment having risen high enough to burst this ancient barrier of wickedness, would also, of necessity, overflow many a dyke, break down many an old embankment, undermine deep foundations of sin, and flood many a sink of iniquity with its waters of cleansing. The same conscientiousness which was unable to tolerate this sin, will also find it difficult to endure that other abuse, and this injustice or neglect; and the company of good men, encouraged with success, warmed with action, bound together in oneness of principle and of endeavor, would continue to co-operate in the work of God, in the warfare of the kingdom of heaven. Thus would it be found, that in this act was involved a whole series of acts—that for its successful accomplishment, a state of mind was necessary, and in it was matured, which was sure to go farther still, and work out manifold and great results.

In considering the probable consequences of any measure, my brethren, we are to enquire, first of all—

In what *state of mind* that measure will leave the Church and the community? What principles are impliedly adopted and obeyed in carrying it through—what convictions have practical working in its accomplishment—what feelings are born and ripened as the project grows and comes to maturity? Now, I affirm, that this people cannot rise in obedience to conscience, and in the strength of God put down any gross and open wickedness—cannot settle any great question of public morality upon high grounds of *duty*, without the conscious, (or unconscious,) adoption of principles which will carry them onward to yet nobler ends;—without a development of feelings which cannot fail to urge the application of those same principles to other departments of life, and other details of action. In a word, the same spirit which led them to do this thing, indwelling still, and grown strong through exercise, and imperious from its triumph, would become a ruling element in their character.

There is every probability, therefore, *That a renewed Christian activity would result from the shutting up of our public schools of vice.*

IV. *This renewal would not be a transient one.*

If you carry any point through artifice, your success even upon a moral question has developed no moral principle, and awakened no new spiritual energy in the public heart. If by an artificial excitement you gain your end, that excitement will leave, when the fume has settled, naught but emptiness, coldness, and dregs of discontent—and the last state shall be worse than the first. But if the body of good men in the community, rising in the strength of a moral conviction, in the fear of God, and in a humane love for their brethren, do utter their solemn judgment of duty, and seal it with deliberate and decisive action, then—*then*—my brethren, quite a different thing has been done—the deed will *stand;* it has a vital power in it, and will grow, and will bear fruit unto remote generations. Yes! The renewed Christian activity which will follow the suppression of our public schools of vice, and our most open profligacy, would be no transient activity. It would give an impulse to every good thing: it would greatly encourage every fainting heart among those who long for the redemption of the people. At the present time, whithersoever we turn, this horrid, giant form lowers upon us, with outspread wings and baleful breath, casting everywhere a deadly shade, infection, torpor, and despair! And how do our hearts sink, as we remember that *good men*, whose hearty co-operance in the divine war, would annihilate this monstrous evil—keep aloof; or standing in its very shadow, shoot their arrows upon their brethren!—that the *good* men are not all clearly and boldly on the side of righteousness—but many of them, through indolence, or a certain wonderful, and inexplicable blindness, or perversity of vision,—do not understand, will not act! If the Spirit of all Evil, the Father of lies, and profligacy, and woes, is palpably among us, shall we hesitate to bid him sternly in the Holy Name—*Go hence!* Why, yes, some say—wait. And they *do* wait. And while we wait, what happens? Crimes and woes, tears, curses, and death—death of the body, and death of souls—and death invading fast the precincts of social and religious life.

But—if we break this lethargy?—if we cut short this delay?—if, in the name of God, we set our foot *forward!*—where is the power that shall make us take it back? No! It would be no transient advantage, no ephemeral victory. It would be a step—I hesitate not to say—in the world's history that would never be retraced. The shadow upon the dial that measures the coming of the day of God, having advanced that degree, would not go backward. Remember, my brethren, when we act thus, upon great moral questions, and from religious motives of deep solemnity, we act, not for ourselves alone, for our church, or our city; but for the world, and for time. For time, did I say? I change the word:—it is for *eternity* that we act. Give quick heed, therefore, my brethren, for the time is short. But—

V. I remark: When there is a renewal of Christian activity, there is also a *heightening and an expanding of Christian love.*

We never unite in the common recognition of a great truth, or especially in the fulfilment of a sacred duty, without being drawn closer to one another. Did you never, when in conversation with one or two intimate friends, light, all together, upon some eminence of thought, as it were—whence you had a common vision of some sublime principle, or some affecting reality, and you were all, on the instant, brethren in spirit, your souls bound by that delightful charm in one tearful, loving, reverent union. Were you, now, to join with them in putting into practice the principle which you thus clearly see; were you together, to struggle with difficulties, and endure adversities, would not your spiritual love be deepened, and would not the sympathies of your hearts be mutually warm and full? Undoubtedly. And if your work had been of a kind to bring your soul into near contact with human woes, and sins, if you had learned to pity the erring, and had sought to lead them back to the good way—if you had opened your heart to the sorrows of the widow and the fatherless children, and moved by love, had sacrificed time, convenience, money for their benefit—I ask whether after all this, your own souls would not probably be warmer, wiser, and stronger than before—more firmly and intimately knit together in love—better fitted to be "temples of the Holy Ghost?" Open your hearts to mercy and pity, then,—give the fulness of your love to your sinning and suffering brother, to shield him from temptations, and see whether there will not be a "heightening and enlargement" of all noble and Christian sentiments within your own bosom. His heart *is* enlarged, whoso runneth in the ways of God's commandments.

But is this work feasible? I remark—

Finally:—We have in the points already specified as likely to be gained, *all the elements of success.*

Nobody doubts that the Christian and conscientious portion of our communities is strong enough, if united in action, very shortly to pervade every rank and order of society with Christian influences. The Church here is wealthy enough, and intelligent, and numerous enough – if it were also holy and zealous—to do much more than merely to "enthrone religion" in this city, and spread through this city the ministrations of Christianity, and to close the schools of vice, and repress open profligacy within the narow limits of its own precincts. And it is the same throughout a great portion of our land. The question is not one of natural power, then, but only regards the possibility and the mode of calling forth that power in harmonious and concentrated action. Is there any *specific method* in which this may be done? The answer has been given; it has been shown, that from a union in combined and successful assault upon the great educational system of iniquity, which has so long proved itself a fountain of bitterness and death—from the final and complete shutting up of the public schools of vice—from the correction, and elevation of moral principle, and the awakening of conscience that must attend such action, a permanently enlarged Christian activity must flow, and from such activity again, a newness and fulness of love; and these, *these* are all that is needed to success. These are the very elements of power;—these, the assurance of that Divine Presence, which is the assurance of triumph.

My hearers, the decision of the great moral question now in debate within this community is a matter of the gravest, the most solemn moment. The heart of Omniscience alone, is adequately conscious of the mighty interests at stake: and yet we can see that the very fundamentals of religion, and even of morality are here involved; and these—are they not the basis of our social order, of our political freedom, of our very existence as a nation?

There are those in our community, the main tendency of whose labors is to seduce the people from the path of right, to intoxicate them with a spirit of license—an intense, wild selfishness, reckless of all things both human and divine; to imbrute their manners, enslave their wills, and destroy their souls—"fitting them, by vice, for bondage," and using them as tools of their own purposes. With great truth has it been remarked, that the "*demagogue* is the worst enemy of his species; for he destroys the foundation of its best hopes, its faith in itself," and (we must add) in God. Of our very freedom, he forges oppression. Under his malign necromancy the holiest names, and the most sacred words become instruments of the vilest uses for vile ends; and there can be no constitution so favorable to true liberty or so carefully guarded, but he is able to transform it into a monster and a curse. Passages in the history of some of our own communities, most lamentably illustrate this fact. For "a system by which the voice of the wise, the experienced and the good, is always drowned in the clamors of an ignorant and violent populace misled by bad men, instead of being a system of equality and freedom, is the very worst kind of inequality and despotism." It is, in fact, but an oligarchy, turned upside down—the government of an invisible committee, self-elected from among the baser sort, ruling them by corrupting them, and aspiring to the exercise through them of supreme control—a despotism of the few, and those few equally irresponsible and untrustworthy—despotism without the proprieties and the splendors of a court—the intrinsic influence of royalty without its majesty and its publicity—a secret and a vulgar tyranny.

But will *not corruption continue to* spread so long as its fountains flow *unchecked? And will not* the demagogue be mighty, so long as his *school—the tippling-shop—*shall unmake the men whom the Lord hath *made? Will not the* people be ruled by base masters, be led into base deeds, so long as they debase themselves? Is public law venerable to them who are without private morality? Is religion sacred to those whose daily practice flouts all her precepts? Is anything sacred to him who makes a mock of duty? Is anything *safe*, when nothing is *sacred?* I repeat it, my hearers; The fundamental interests of society are at stake in this question. The inextinguishable curse of God rests on the community which endures the dominion of the demagogue and the drinking shop!

It is wonderful, and it is fearful how, oft times, years are condensed into a single act; how destinies hang upon single threads. The decision takes but an instant: and that instant it is decisive forever! The stroke of the murderer is swift as thought: that moment, there is *murder!* The soul of the guilty man had wavered, and reluctated and hesitated long, it may be; but, finally, in the twinkling of a star the die is cast—the deed is done! All eternity does not wipe out or diminish that brief moment. It was itself an eternity in an instant. The general of an army is weary, and his men complain. He tarries for a night, and lo! the morning that should have brought victory, brings defeat, and an empire's overthrow: the face of the world is changed, and the great stream of events is turned into new channels. All time looks backward to that moment of folly, and eternity can never forget it. O DUTY! Awful word! A duty neglected—what ruin may not that neglect inherit! In single acts, my hearerrs, are bound up long years' results of character. From single acts again, flow long years' results in character: and character is the root of destiny. This community, these churches bearing the sacred name of Christ, this our church for whose character and influence we are responsible—they will reap what they sow. Duties come. They tarry not long: but if they receive not our homage, they are gone—their hour is past!

A future of apppalling greatness is coming fast upon the people of this land. A few generations more, and the world will behold on this western continent, either most terrible catastrophes, or a glorious and an eternal triumph. The problem of mankind's destiny for ages to come is to be solved here. We shall need a great abundance of that heavenly salt, and that celestial light which are found only in the souls of the just, that we may not perish in our corruption, and cloud with premature darkness the bright day which seems to be dawning. We are called upon by the most tender appeals which can be addreseed to the human heart; by motives of solemn and overruling import—absolutely immense in their grandeur—to be faithful to the duties of our day, and to secure to the next generations, upon whom will probably come some of the severest trials which have ever visited our humanity, the advantage of a firm basis of *religious principle.* It is necessary for our temporal security, for the permanence of our institutions and the freedom and peace of our homes, that we should thoroughly christianize these communities—enthroning religion above all other law, and giving the stated ministrations of Christian truth in some form, to every family, and closing every *public school of iniquity.* If we neglect to do so, then, there is nothing better before us than what we now see on the continent of Europe—corruption, oppression, anarchy, gloom, fear, alternate fury and despair. Such must be the lot of nations that know not God. And in this social ruin, what devastation of individual souls—thousands and millions spending the day of their probation in sins and bitter woes, and dying under a cloud!

The Past joins with the mysterious and wonderful Future, in calling unto us; and they say—"Be faithful to the memory of your Fathers; betray not the hopes of your sons; be obedient to God, be faithful to man—then shall neither you nor your children after you ever acknowledge any earthly master, or bend the knee to any mortal dominion; but ye shall all *be free forever,* and ye shall be called the sons of God."

My hearers, I leave this matter in your hands. You will act, or neglect to act. You will be faithful or unfaithful: and over all is God, who *knoweth all,* and who judgeth all.

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SERMON DXCII.

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THE DEMANDS OF SINNERS UNREASONABLE.

"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on him."—Matt. xxvii. 42.

These words were uttered respecting Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees, after they had nailed him to the cross. They contain a confession that he had wrought miracles in saving others, and a charge that he was unable to save himself. They contain, also, a demand that he would prove his claims to the Messiahship by coming down from the cross, and a promise, that, if he would do this, they would receive him as the Messiah. It strikes us at once that this demand is unreasonable even to effrontery.

But, my hearers, the question, " Will you receive Christ as your Saviour?" was not presented to the Jews of his own generation alone; it is a practical question to every hearer of the gospel; it is a practical question to you, and, as such, without doubt, you have all made it a subject of deliberation and decision. Yet many of you would tell me, should I ask you, that you have not accepted Christ as he is offered in the gospel; that you do not exercise repentance for sin and faith in the Saviour; that you have never experienced that new birth, without which, as Jesus himself declares, no man can see the kingdom of God. I suppose you have some reason for this. I am not at liberty to suppose, that, as reasonable beings, you are acting on this momentous subject without giving to yourselves some reason which satisfies, or at least silences your consciences, and relieves you from the unpleasant conviction that your conduct in this respect is absolutely without reason, and therefore foolish. And probably you are making demands, on compliance with which you think you would accept the Saviour. "If the way of salvation were plainer, or if it were different, if my own circumstances in this respect or in that were altered—if God would exert a more powerful influence to awaken me, I would give my heart to him." Just so the Jews, in the very act of crucifying Christ, had their reason by which they justified themselves—"though he saved others, he cannot save himself; therefore we do well to reject his claims as the Messiah, and to crucify him as an impostor." They also had their demands, on compliance with which they promised to receive him; "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." It is my purpose—it may startle, I hope it will not offend you—it is my purpose to compare your reasons and demands with those by which the Pharisees justified themselves in crucifying Jesus. I intend to show that yours are as really unreasonable as theirs. My subject is, THE UNREASONABLENESS OF THE DEMANDS OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.

I. You make demands which are unreasonable, because compliance with them would defeat the divine plan of redemption.

This was one characteristic of the unreasonable demand of the Pharisees. If Christ had come down from the cross, the work of redemption would never have been finished. Similar demands are often made by ungodly men—demands that Christ would come down from the cross, that he would save us in some other way than by his atoning sacrifice, and his blood. Many, when aroused to the importance of gaining God's favor, I have known to say, "If, to win heaven, it were only necessary to go on the most wearying pilgrimage, or to build a costly temple, or to afflict my body by fasting, or scourging, most gladly would I do it; but to be saved by repentance and faith in Christ seems so dark and difficult, I cannot come to God." This fact, familiar to all pastors who have had much intercourse with those who are seeking everlasting life, proves that the pilgrimages, the self-inflicted torments, the hermit's life, which abound where superstition reigns, result from a principle universally present in the human heart. If men could only scourge, and flay, and torture themselves into heaven, how gladly would they undertake it. If Christ would come down from the cross, they would gladly save themselves by their own sacrifices. If it were only penance instead of penitence, how gladly would they obey the requirement.

Of the same character is the prevalent disposition to seek salvation by good works alone. Men plead that if they are kind in their families, and to the poor; if they do not lie nor cheat, they shall win everlasting life; while they forget that, if they have been honest toward men, they have robbed God of the honor due *unto his name*; that, much as they talk of doing as they would be done by, they fail of keeping even this part of the law, which, like all the rest, is "exceeding broad;" that even if the claim that they do not lie, and do not wrong any one, is well-founded, this is only a negative virtue, only a claim that they avoid certain sins, not that they practice all the positive and perfect holiness which is required; and they forget that even if their lives are outwardly correct, their hearts are vile in God's sight. Hence, the first step of the sinner, when awakened to his danger, usually is to make resolutions to lead a better life, striving, by his own righteousness, to win God's favor, and fogetting Christ's words, "without me ye can do nothing." If God would propose to him, sinner as he is, to save himself by the law, to be so holy, to do so great good works, that no reward less than eternal blessedness would meet the merits of his wonderful goodness, he would undertake the hopeless task; but, as a lost sinner, to plead before the cross for mercy, and to receive salvation as a free gift from God, to lead a holy life, not in his own strength, but by divine grace; not for the sake of purchasing heaven by merit, but out of humble love to the Redeemer—this he is not willing to do. His demand is that Christ come down from the cross; it is a demand, compliance with which would set aside the cross, and defeat the divine plan of redemption by grace.

II. Your demands are unreasonable, because you create yourselves the very difficulties which you claim to have removed. Jesus was moving among the Jews, working the most convincing miracles. They seized him, and nailed him to the cross: then they demanded that he should undo what their own malice had done,—"Come down from the cross, and we will believe." A similar unreasonableness belongs to many of your demands. You say that you are so immersed in business that you have no time to attend to religion; that worldly cares crowd at every moment on your mind: that, if you try to think of God, your thoughts wander to the world; that you cannot awaken in your own mind an interest in religious subjects; that, if you resolve to give more attention to religion, your old habits prevail, and your resolutions are broken; that, though you know you are a sinner, you cannot feel it, and, though you know Christ is lovely, you cannot love him. But why are these things so? Who is responsible for the existence of these difficulties? Is it not your own hand that has plunged your soul into this flood of worldliness, with its "temptations, and snares, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition?" Is it not yourself who have nurtured by indulgence these strong habits of sin, fixed your affections on it, and deadened your sensibility to its guilt? With what reason can you urge, as your apology for inaction, the chains which your own hands have fastened on your souls? Wherein is it more reasonable than the plea of the Pharisees, who first *nailed Christ* to the cross, and then urged the *fact that he hung there as the justification* of his crucifixion?

III. Demands are unreasonable which require additional evidence of the importance of religion, when sufficient has been already given.

Unreasonableness of this kind characterized the demand of the Pharisees. They had seen the Saviour's miracles—healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead—miracles as great as it would have been to come down from the cross. It was unreasonable in them to propose that, if a single miracle should be added to the multitude already given, they would be ready to receive Jesus as the Christ. Precisely similar is the unreasonableness of many of your demands. They imply that you have not sufficient evidence of the reality of religion, though you have evidence in abundance. Your demands imply that a trifling addition of the very same kind of evidence would remove all difficulty, and make you a believer at once.

You imagine, for example, that the reason why you do not accept Christ, lies in the dimness of spiritual realities. You say, "If I had lived in Christ's day, and had seen his miracles, I should have been his disciple;" or, "If I should be caught up, like Paul, into the third heavens, or if one should come to me from the dead, I should be persuaded." But why delude yourself thus? You do not doubt that Christ came into the world to save sinners; why, then, do you ask for additional evidence? You have no doubt that he wrought miracles and rose from the dead; why do you imagine that one miracle more would make God's service pleasant? Do you ask that one should come to you from the dead, and do you not know that messengers have come from heaven to earth, even the Son of God himself? And his message—the Word of God—have you not in your own hand? Why do you imagine that additional miracles would quench your love of the world and make you delight in Christ's service? Your demand is like that of the crucifiers of Jesus, when after all his miracles, his holy life, his divine teachings, they said, "Come down from the cross, and we will believe." The Saviour has said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." It would be easy to show why it would be so; that all the wonders which you ask would fail to lead you to Christ any more than the wonders which the Bible records; but time forbids; I leave you with the Saviour's solemn asseveration of the fact, "If ye hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would you be persuaded though one rose from the dead." In addition, I will only suggest to you the fact, which may well awaken your suspicion, that your reasoning is mere self-delusion, that the Pharisees once presented the very same plea. At the very moment when they were plotting the death of the Son of God, they were lamenting the martyrdom of the ancient prophets, and saying, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets." What but a like self-delusion do you exhibit when you say, "If we had lived in the days of Jesus, we should have been his loving disciples," or urge any plea which implies that your neglect of religion is owing to the distance and obscurity of spiritual realities?

Other demands exhibit the same unreasonableness. The reason most commonly given for indifference to religion, is the inconsistency of professors. Speak to men on the necessity of their repentance, and, in three cases out of four, before the conversation closes, they will parry the appeal by saying that the lives of members of the churches are not consistent with their profession. I wonder it never occurs to you, that this very fact is itself a proof that the gospel is true; for the Saviour foretold that there would be many who would profess to be his servants whom he never knew. If such false professors had not always existed, His word would not have been proved true. But aside from this, your plea involves an unreasonableness like that of the demand of the Pharisees, that Christ would come down from the cross; for it assumes, that if you only had a little more evidence of the reality of religion, precisely like that of which you already have much, you would repent. I presume every one of you knows some whom he acknowledges as real Christians;—perhaps a venerated parent, a beloved wife, a son, or daughter, now passed into the heavens. And beyond the circle of your personal acquaintance, among those who forsake kindred and home, and toil through life for the salvation of the heathen, among those who explore the vaults of prisons and the cellars of cities, to do good to the outcast and the wretched, among those who toil in obscurity, and from house to house, to carry Bibles and to extend the knowledge of the gospel, among those who in this nineteenth century are suffering imprisonment, impoverishment, and even persecution unto death, for the love of Christ, you must believe that there are many who exhibit the beauty and power of true religion. Nay, you may go back through all the past, and look at the PAULS, the HOWARDS, the MARTYNS, whose lives have adorned the history of man, and at the countless company of the martyrs of our God. Consider, also, all the beneficent influences of Christianity in enlightening and purifying mankind. You are no stranger to these triumphs of the cross, to these demonstrations of its divine power. And yet you plead, that, because A, B, and C, do not live consistently with their profession, you will neglect religion, and treat it as if it were a worthless imposture. Like the Pharisees, who, after seeing Christ's many miracles, promised that, if he would work one more, they would believe, you, after beholding the power of the Gospel in the heavenly lives and happy deaths of your own acquaintance, in imparting to those once vile the spirit of Christ, in transforming bloody and licentious heathen into gentle and pure disciples of the Prince of Peace, in ennobling the world's history with philanthropists, reformers, and martyrs for the truth, and in quickening, guiding, and purifying the progress of mankind; after all this evidence you say, that if a few inconsistent professors of your own acquaintance would live as they ought, you would condescend to consider the claims of your Saviour, your Creator, your God.

Similar are all the reasons for neglecting religion, founded on its mysteries. One says he will not accept Christ because he does not understand the doctrine of election; another because he cannot explain all the mysteries of the Trinity; and yet another declares that he cannot understand why sin and evil exist in the world at all. Forgetting how many dark things revelation has made plain, forgetting especially that it has made the path of duty so plain "that he may run that readeth it," such a man will not obey the plain requirements of the gospel, he will not take a step to save his own soul from hell, till all mysteries are explained, all objections removed, and all the questions of idle curiosity answered.

You may see, in another aspect, the unreasonableness of all these demands by contrasting your conduct in spiritual things with your conduct in temporal. When you began the business in which you are now engaged, did you suppose that every person engaged in it so completely understood and so perfectly applied its principles as to secure a fortune, or even to save himself from ruin? Did you suppose every one engaged in it was perfectly honest? Did you stop and say, I will have nothing to do with this business till I know there are no bunglers nor knaves engaged in it? When you commenced your business, did you perfectly understand it? Were there no questions which you could not answer? And were there no serious objections and difficulties in the way? Were you sure of success? Do you not know that in worldly affairs, men never wait for certainty, but act on probability?—that they never wait for the removal of objections, but act in spite of them? If men never engaged in worldly business till all who are engaged in it managed it wisely, honestly, and successfully; if they never acted except on certainty—never acted till everything dark was cleared up, and every objection removed, they would never act at all. How unreasonable in your spiritual concerns to adopt principles of action, which, should they be adopted in temporal affairs, would bring all the business of the world to a dead stand!

IV. It is unreasonable to demand more, when God has already done so much in your behalf; especially when you have not made improvement of what he has done.

The Jews might have known from the ancient prophecies, that Christ was to suffer an ignominious death. The whole history of Jesus had coincided with what had been predicted of him. His stupendous miracles, his divine teachings, his holy life, his very position on the cross were proofs that he was the Messiah. It was unreasonable—it was mockery and cruelty, to ask him in the hour of his agony to work another miracle for the satisfaction of his murderers.

The sacrifice of atonement is now completed. Christ has passed through his humiliation, he has tasted death, he has ascended to heaven, he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Now from the mercy-seat comes the assurance, "All things are ready; whosoever will let him come." After all that God has done, the only reasonable course for every sinner is, to come to Christ, to yield to him and be saved. Every reason for delay, every demand for something more, is an implied charge that God has not done enough for your redemption. It is gazing on the manger at Bethlehem, on the tempted sufferer in the wilderness, on the agony of Gethsemane and the dying anguish of the cross, and then demanding that the Son of God sink to a deeper humiliation, suffer a severer anguish. It is denying God's declaration, "All things are ready." It is denying the Savior's dying words, "It is finished." It is declaring that the work of redemption is not complete, the Saviour not worthy to be trusted. My hearers, what could be done for your salvation, which God has not done? What motives could be produced mightier to make you in earnest to win God's favor, to melt your heart in contrition, to kindle love, to rouse you to a life of holiness? What way of salvation more excellent, more complete? What invitations more free and full? What terms of salvation more simple and easy of acceptance? What Saviour more able, more accessible, more lovely? God himself looks at the subject in this light; he sees the unreasonableness of your demands; as if grieved by the implied charge which you bring against him, he condescends to expostulate with you in tones of tenderness, "What more could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

And your unreasonableness appears not only in the fact that God has done so much, but also in the fact that, while demanding more, you have made no improvement of what God has already done. You complain, for example, that you have no time to serve God. But, aside from the fact that the greater part of serving God consists in doing the daily business of life with a supreme desire to please him—and it takes no more time to do business to please God, than to do it to please yourself—aside from all this, God gives you fifty-two Sabbaths every year, to be set apart solely to religious uses. What use have you made of these Sabbaths? You complain that the way of salvation is dark. But God has given you the Bible. Have you anxiously studied it, to learn what you must do to be saved? Are you thus studying it every day? You are surrounded by religious books, like Dodridge's Rise and Progress of Religion, designed to guide inquirers in the way of life. Do you ever read such books? You have a pastor—do you ever come to him with the inquiry, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" God has promised to enlighten and guide those who pray to him. Do you pray to God for wisdom?

Do you yield yourself to God for his guidance? You complain that divine influences do not descend on your heart with power sufficient to arouse it from its sluggishness. But God has drawn you by his Spirit? Did you yield to his drawings? Have you not rather grieved him away? Behold the effrontery of your demands, since God has done so much, and you have made no good use of what he has already done.

V. Your demands are unreasonable, because God has proved it by testing them. You have made similar demands before; God has condescended to comply with them, and yet you did not, even then, keep the promises which you had made.

Time and again had the Pharisees asked Jesus to give them a sign, that they might see and believe. Signs he had given them, the most stupendous and convincing: yet they were not more ready to receive him than before. At last, when they were clamoring as usual for a sign, he told them that no more signs should be given them excepting only the sign of Jonah, the prophet; by which he meant that last proof of his Messiahship, his own death and resurrection. And when on the cross he was giving them this last proof, they again clamored for a sign, and promised to believe him if he would come down from the cross. And even after that, when he rose from the dead, they still rejected him. I doubt not that like this has been the history of some of you. You are thinking, perhaps, that, should there be a revival of religion, you would come to Christ. You had thought so before; yet in the last revival were you more disposed to accept Christ as a disciple than you are to-day? You say that if your companions should experience religion, you would go with them to Christ. But what were your feelings when your wife, your child began to hope in the Saviour's mercy? How was it when those neighbors, those intimate friends united with the church? You were young once; then you said, "When the gayety of youth is past, I will begin a religious life." You are older now; gray hairs, perhaps, are on you. But are you more disposed to prayer, to penitence and faith than in the rosy years of youth? Ah, sirs, God has complied with these very demands; but you have not been ready to keep your promises. You are as far from the kingdom of heaven as ever.

VI. Your demands are unreasonable, because, in the very act of making them you admit what justifies your condemnation.

The Pharisees said, "He saved others." They admitted that he had wrought miracles. And although during the earliest periods of the Christian era, there were enemies of Christianity, who spoke and wrote against it with all the ingenuity and learning of the times, yet it is a remarkable fact that not one was found during the life of Christ, or in the period immediately following, who ventured to deny that Christ wrought miracles. So the Pharisees, in the very act of crucifying him, admitted the reality of his miracles. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Thus, by the very justification which they attempted, they condemned themselves.

So is it with you. Whatever reason you may give for neglecting religion, you admit its divine authority, its reality, and importance. Were I to charge you with being infidels, you would be indignant at the aspersion. Were I to say you do not respect religion, you would repel the charge as slander. In the very act of giving your reasons for neglecting religion, you are careful to avow your respect for it, and your belief in its importance. And do you not thus condemn yourself? If religion is a reality, it is a reality infinitely momentous. If it is important, it is infinitely important. What is wealth, what is human honor, compared with the favor of God? What all earthly interests compared with the salvation of the soul? What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Oh, sirs, if religion is important, it is so important that no reason can justify the neglect of it; no reason can justify any conduct respecting it, but that which puts it before all earthly interests, which impels to seek God's favor with uncontrollable and imperishable earnestness; which forbids any rest, till you rest in a good hope through grace of everlasting life. Therefore, in your attempt to justify, you condemn yourselves. Therefore, the all-seeing Judge will pronounce to you those fearful words, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that religion was important,—why then didst thou not seek my favor with an earnestness corresponding to its importance? Thou wert surrounded with difficulties,—why then didst thou not toil to overcome them with an earnestness and perseverance corresponding to the worth of thy soul? "Out of thine mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

VII. Your demands and apologies are unreasonable, because they lay the blame of your continued impenitence on God.

After nailing Jesus, by their own malice, to the cross, the Pharisees called on him to come down, and then by his neglect to do it, justified themselves in putting him to death as a self-convicted impostor. Thus, they laid the blame on him. So, if you examine your apologies for neglecting religion, you may find that they involve the same daring impiety; they lay the blame of your continued impenitence on God. You plead that you continue in sin, because the circumstances in which God has placed you are unfavorable to a religious life, or because God has not made the way of salvation sufficiently plain, or because God has not given you enough of his Spirit. The cause is always in God, never in yourself. Like the Jews, who blasphemously charged the blame of their own crime on the suffering Saviour, you charge all the criminality of your impenitence and disobedience on God. You ascribe it to what God has done or neglected to do, not to yourselves.

But the criminality of your impenitence and disobedience rests on you alone. The real cause why you continue impenitent lies in your own hearty opposition to God, and your aversion to the duties and experience of a spiritual life. No reason, which you can urge, covers this fact from the sight of God, or abates the constant criminality of your impenitence, or your immediate and constant obligation to give your heart to him, to trust in Jesus for mercy, and to devote yourself to his service. When the sinner comes to Jesus, he sees that all the blame of his whole life of impenitence rests on his own head, that God has always been blameless and lovely in all his requirements, and all his dealings, and that he himself stands before God a sinner, whose sins are unveiled, and absolutely without apology or extenuation, deserving the wrath of God. May you thus discover your inexcusable guilt, that you may seek mercy before it is too late. But if not now, at least when you stand before God's judgment seat, you will discover it. The apologies and demands by which you now appease your own consciences, and which you so confidently utter to your fellow-men, you will not then utter to God. Nay, you will not utter them in the secresy of your own soul. The refuge of lies, which now covers you, will vanish, and you will find yourself standing revealed before God an inexcusable transgressor; revealed to your own inmost consciousness, an inexcusable transgressor. You will be speechless before your Judge. You will see that your life-long neglect of God had no justification or apology; that it was wholly unreasonable and unjustifiable; that you have no plea to break the force of the condemnation which falls on you, or even in the depth of your own consciousness to sustain you with the conviction that it is undeserved. "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world be guilty before God."

SERMON DXCIII.

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THE REASONABLENESS AND BLESSEDNESS OF PRAYER.

"**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.**"—JAMES iv. 8.

Worshipping with a pious heart is evidently the manner of drawing nigh to God, which the Apostle had in mind when he penned the text. It is elsewhere in the Scriptures, designated in this way:—Says the Psalmist, "It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God."—Writing to the Hebrews, the apostle exhorts; "Having a high Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith."

Under the Jewish dispensation, drawing near to God in worship was a more literal thing than it is under the Christian dispensation. In the temple, God had his dwelling place as a king in his palace. There the Shekinah, as the visible symbol of his glory, manifested his presence. There was the mercy-seat; there the altar, and there the offering was to be made to him. Hence his people were required to come to that place, and there wait upon him in the manner of his own appointment.

It will not be understood from this, that Jewish worship was only of this outward, ceremonial character. The *heart* was required of them as well as of us. "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people."—Isa. xxix. 13, 14. Nevertheless, under the Christian dispensation, the worship of God is more strictly of a spiritual character than it was under the former, as is indicated by the Saviour's remark to the woman of Samaria. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."—The apostles did not understand this as discountenancing all outward worship—all expressed devotion; since prayer and preaching the word, baptizing and breaking bread, were afterwards frequently engaged in by them as religious duties. The Saviour's meaning, therefore, must have been simply that what God requires in worship is, that the *heart* be in it; and that such worship may be rendered to him any where.

The duty of worshipping God is no less the dictate of reason and of common sense, than of Scripture. It has been the sentiment of mankind, universally, that children ought to cherish peculiar respect for their parents. So men have always deemed it proper to specially regard and honor those high in authority. Can they who thus honor parents and magistrates, deny the obligation to do homage to HIM who is at once their Maker, their Sovereign and their Judge? Grant that God is in no wise benefitted by the homage we render to him. Certainly no one supposes that we can add any thing to his essential glory. We can place him no higher than he is—cannot increase his happiness. Yet the homage we render to him may exalt him in our own hearts, and among our fellow mortals, and thus his declarative glory be promoted on the earth. It is not, however, my purpose on this occasion to dwell upon the general duty of worshipping God. I design rather to remark on that part of worship, which with peculiar propriety, may be denominated "drawing nigh to God;" and would address you on the *reasonableness* and *blessedness* of PRAYER.

I. Its *reasonableness.*

1. *God has enjoined it.*—This may strike you at first as a strange reason to be assigned for the performance of any duty. But it must be counted reasonable to do what God has commanded, and most unreasonable to disregard his positive injunctions.

But has God, in explicit terms, enjoined this duty upon men? Yes, again and again. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."—"Continuing instant in prayer."—"Pray without ceasing." Many such declarations and commands are to be found in the Scriptures. Now, unless we deny that the Bible is the word of God, or, admitting this, deny his authority over us—a stretch of boldness not to be expected of any man—we must acknowledge that it is our duty to pray; and this implies that it is reasonable.

2. The reasonableness of prayer may be shown from the example of the Saviour. Repeatedly in the New Testament we read of his being engaged in this exercise—at his baptism—at the transfiguration—in the garden. He spent whole nights in prayer. He taught his disciples to pray. They, certainly, counted his example and teachings authoritative in regard to the performance of this duty. And so we often find them after his ascension, supplicating the divine blessing, and receiving it in answer to their petitions. If, then, it was proper and reasonable for the Saviour to pray, and for the apostles to follow his example, on what ground can any man reasonably refuse to do the same.

3. The reasonableness of prayer is manifest when we consider what we are—

(*a*) As *needy* and *dependent* creatures. Every hour of our lives brings with it wants which must be supplied, or we suffer and die. And while our necessities are thus numerous and pressing, we are utterly unable, apart from the divine bounty, to provide for a single one of them. Can any sufficient reason be assigned why such creatures should refuse humbly to ask God for his blessing.

(*b*) As *sinful* and *unworthy* creatures. This might seem to us a reason why we ought *not*, rather than why we *should*, pray. Certainly it must be confessed that our sins strip us of all rightful claim to be heard in heaven, though pleading our own wants. But no one has, or can have any other idea of prayer, than as being addressed to the mercy of God; and when that mercy invites us freely to come and make known our desires, it is most unreasonable (to use no harsher term) in us not to avail ourselves of the privilege.

(*c*) As *dying* and *accountable* creatures. Who can be willing to go into the presence of God without ever having called reverently upon his name. Who can feel easy in view of future accountability, whose heart has never been sufficiently grateful to acknowledge the Divine goodness, nor sufficiently humble to confess its sins and seek the Divine forgiveness? A prayerless sinner, who is not an infidel in its very worst sense, is as unreasonable a man as exists on the earth. Confessedly living under the eye of God; expecting to die and to stand before him in judgment, and yet refusing to acknowledge his favor in humble prayer! willing to make requests of his fellow men; to send his petition to those in authority, while yet he refuses to ask God for blessings hourly needed, and to render thanks for those incessantly bestowed! If this be not unreasonable, it is difficult to say what is: and if the reasonableness of a duty may be shown from the unreasonableness of neglecting it, there seems no need of saying more on this point. There is, however, another consideration which may properly be named in this connection.

4. As showing the reasonableness of prayer, consider the *benefits* of a persevering attendance on this duty. Not to God, as was before said, as if it could add to his essential glory or happiness in any degree. But to those who pray, and for whom prayer is offered.—Prayer is the way to a life of communion with God—a means of keeping up an acquaintance with, and of growing in the knowledge of God. It is a most excellent, yea, an *essential* means of nourishing the new nature, and of causing the soul to prosper. It is a good preservative from sin; as it is said, "praying will make us leave sinning," or "sinning will make us leave praying."—It hath a great tendency, says Edwards, "to keep the soul in a wakeful frame, and to lead us to a strict walk with God, and to a life that shall be fruitful in such good works as tend to adorn the doctrine of Christ, and to cause our light so to shine before others, that they, seeing our good works, shall glorify our Father who is in heaven." Nor are these all the benefits conferred by it. It prevails with God, as Jacob did, and brings down answers of peace and blessing. The Bible is full of instances in proof. We proceed to consider—

II. The *blessedness* of Prayer.

1. This may be seen in the first place, by considering the *nature of the exercise itself*.

Prayer usually embraces three things,—*praise*—*confession* and *supplication*. The ascription of praise to God is certainly a delightful exercise to every grateful heart. The glory of his nature, and the blessings that flow continually from his bountiful hand, call for expressions of gratitude from every human tongue. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" A grateful heart is burdened with a sense of obligation until it finds relief in rendering a tribute of thanks to Him who is the giver of every good and every perfect gift. We can say with the Psalmist, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High."

Confession of sin is a part of prayer full of blessedness. To the proud heart of the wilful transgressor, such an assertion, I am aware, may seem extravagant, if not indeed false; but the humble child of God who has been brought to see the "exceeding sinfulness of sin," readily admits its truth, as he has often been conscious of it in his own experience. What a blessed hour was that to the poor prodigal when he came to himself, and said, "I will arise and go to my father." And when he poured his heart-broken confession into his injured father's ear, and met that loving father's warm embrace, he felt a joy which a squandered inheritance had never afforded. How far happier was David, the penitent confessor, penning the fifty-first Psalm, than was ever David the king, enjoying the fruit of his murderous sin. And when the repentant sinner bows before his Heavenly Father uttering the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me, *a sinner*," he experiences in his heart a joy which the world cannot give. It is on the principle of which we are now speaking that days of fasting and humiliation before God are not unfrequently days of the very highest enjoyment to those who observe them. At such times the Scripture is fulfilled. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite spirit, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Supplication, too, as a part of prayer, is a blessed exercise. To solicit favors from our fellow men is seldom agreeable to us. We are doubtful as to the reception our solicitations may meet with from him to whom we come. We may not find him in a pleasant mood; he may think we come too often; or it may not be convenient for him at the time to attend to our request. Not thus is it with our Father in heaven. His language to us is "Come"—come freely—come often—come at any time. Prefer your requests. "Ask, and it shall be given you." He may not grant the *very thing* we ask. Yet if that be denied he will bestow other blessings instead; or in some way cause the refusal to subserve our highest good. We may be assured that he will never think the worse of us for asking, even though he sees it best to withhold from us the desire of our heart.

Good when he gives,—supremely good,—
Nor less when he denies;
E'en crosses, from his sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.

2. We may learn the blessedness of prayer by its *effect* on the *character* of him who offers it, and also by the blessings *bestowed in answer* to it. To both these benefits we alluded when speaking of the reasonableness of prayer. We remark further,—that the effects of this exercise on the character of him who prays are truly blessed. Prayer is communion with God. It is expressing to him the feelings and desires of the heart. Every one has observed that the effect of frequent intercourse is to assimilate in character those between whom the intercourse exists; they become like each other. Upon this principle, much prayer may be expected to produce heavenly-mindedness. Sin cannot appear so attractive to the soul conversant with the purity of heaven. Earth insensibly sinks to its proper place. Its riches, honors, pleasures, appear to us little worth while we look at the things eternal "not seen." A religion without prayer, is a religion without God. It is impossible for a man to keep in mind a vivid idea of a God, with whom he never communes, from whom he receives no instructions, to whom he prefers no request, and renders no homage. The Bible ignores such a religion.

Consider the blessings bestowed in answer to prayer. Many deny that any connection exists between prayer and the bestowment of blessing. In their estimation it is folly to suppose that God's greatness could condescend to listen to our petitions, or that his counsels would suffer him to answer them. But *the* BOOK declares that God *does* hear prayer; and instances in proof are recorded on its almost every page. Abraham plead for the righteous in the doomed cities of the plain; Jacob wrestled with the angel until with the morning light came an answer of peace; Moses interceded repeatedly and successfully in behalf of revolting Israel; Elijah shut and opened the windows of heaven; Daniel was heard in the land of his captivity, and the apostles and early Christians were again and again answered while in the name of their ascended Master they plead for the protection of Heaven, and sought blessings for which they had been instructed to ask. The church in all ages has been a witness to the blessed efficacy of prayer. Every humble, faithful Christian, is witness to it.

And what more delightful than to know that, insignificant and sinful as we are, we may yet draw nigh to the great and holy God—may make our requests unto him, assured that if presented with a right spirit they will be heard, and answered in that way that shall be for our best good. How often have God's children gone with their sorrows to a throne of grace, and, casting their burden on the Lord, felt themselves sustained by the everlasting arms. When difficulties and perplexities increase on every hand, and waves of affliction roll darkly over the soul, then is verified to them the truth expressed by the stanza:

From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;
'Tis found before the mercy-seat.

What a relief to a mother's burdened heart to be permitted to go to her Heavenly Father and plead for the son she loves, assured that Heaven cares for her! And trusting in God's promises, to believe that in years to come—it may be when she slumbers in the grave—those prayers shall be answered, and that loved, though wayward son, be at length gathered into the fold of the good Shepherd. How gracious the privilege accorded to the church, of coming with all her desires to a mercy-seat made accessible through the blood of her crucified Lord—being heard in his name who is head over all things for her sake. Gathered together with one accord in one place like the disciples of old, her petitions come up with acceptance before Him who is "nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth."

Good men have always been men of prayer. Enoch undoubtedly was such; for he walked with God, and this implies communion with him, which includes prayer. Such, too, were Noah, Daniel, Job, Abraham and Jacob. David was eminently a man of prayer as his Psalms abundantly testify. Allusion has already been made to the Saviour's example in this respect, as also to that of the apostles and early Christians who had both his example and precepts for their guide. In times nearer our own there have been many of like spirit: some standing in the high places of Zion; others moving in humbler spheres—all accustomed often to draw nigh to God in prayer. The way to the throne was familiar to them—communion with God their highest privilege. From the heart they could say with the Psalmist; "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live."

The text, my brethren, reveals the secret of all true religion. "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you." When the backslidden Christian returns to a forsaken mercy-seat, and pours the breathings of a penitent soul into the ear of his patient Heavenly Father; when the closet is revisited as a place of sacred communion with the Father of spirits, and there the fainting heart unburdens itself of its crushing load of worldliness and sin: when the family altar has been erected again, and the morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving is offered thereon;

and when the prayer circle is re-entered by the wanderer, and his voice is again heard among his brethren supplicating the divine mercy, and pleading the promises of infinite love—then is the joy of salvation restored to that soul, and peace and hope abide there again.

When we, as a church, endeavor unitedly to draw nigh to God, and plead fervently that he will draw nigh unto us that we may walk in the light of his countenance again; when all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking are put away from us, with all malice; and we are kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us; when we can carry our gift to the altar and offer it there without a brother having aught against us, and plead for God's blessing on every inhabitant of Zion; and when the dying sinner's case lies heavy upon our heart, till, like a cart pressed beneath its sheaves, we bear it before God in the name of the sinner's Advocate and Redeemer—then may we hope to see the salvation of Israel come out of Zion. "When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

There dwelt at Ayr in Scotland two hundred and fifty years ago a clergyman of more than common piety. Before his conversion he had been remarkable for his daring wickedness. Settled at Ayr, he found a wild, reckless, drinking, fighting people. To them he preached faithfully the gospel of Christ. For them he prayed. He was known often to spend the whole night in the meeting house, alone, in prayer. When at home reclining on his bed, he always kept lying near at hand a cloak, which he was accustomed to throw over his shoulders as he rose again and again to pray during the night watches. His wife, once expostulating with him about it, he replied: Ah, woman, woman; you know not what it is to bear the burden of three thousand souls for whom you must give account. Would that every servant of God possessed the apostolic faith and fervor of John Welsh!

Prayer, my brethren, is a holy privilege. The ear of him who sitteth upon the throne forever, is open to receive our supplications. We may draw nigh to him, and he will draw nigh to us. "I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." As we raise our feeble voices toward the throne, they seem wafted on angels' wings to our great High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us; and perfumed with his precious blood, they are offered at the mercy-seat, where offering of his was never rejected. Then comes down the answer of peace from the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; the soul feels the refreshing presence of Jehovah. And the Christian, all nerved again for holy enterprise, and clad with zeal as a cloak, goes forth to engage in the work to which God in his providence may call him.

Elijah had felt, in common with his countrymen, the sad effects of the drought visited upon the land by reason of the wickedness of Ahab, and of the more wicked Jezebel and her court. "And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." But the Lord God of Elijah must first be acknowledged by that idolatrous people. After that the prophets of Baal had vainly called upon their god "from morning until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice," "it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Jacob; let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me; that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, he is the God: the Lord, he is the God."—God was ready, having thus been acknowledged, to bestow the blessing for lack of which the land was nigh to perish.

May we not hope, my brethren, that the same God has in store *spiritual* blessings for us? But ere he bestow them he will be honored by his own people. They must come out from the world, the love of which is enmity against Him: must turn from their covetousness, which is idolatry; and, confessing their God from whom they have departed, draw nigh to him that he may draw nigh to them. Then will the windows of heaven be opened, and blessings descend in showers, until the church, like a well watered garden, shall bloom with beauty.

The 20th of June, 1630, was observed as a communion season by the Kirk of Shotts, in Scotland. During the communion-service, there were precious manifestations of the presence of the Lord with his people, who felt they could not separate without further religious exercises on the morrow. A young clergyman* was appointed to preach. In the morning, while walking alone in the fields, his soul sunk within him as he thought of the duty he was to perform. He felt inadequate to the task. The hour of service came. The minister trembled as he went forward to address the multitude that had assembled, but was sustained and helped in a wonderful manner. He earnestly exhorted the people to seek the Lord while he might be found, and to call upon him while he was near. The word spoken was with power and with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. More than five hundred souls dated their spiritual birth from the awakenings of that hour. It afterwards appeared that the preacher and several others had passed the whole previous night in prayer. Here was the secret of the power which attended that preaching.

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* Rev. John Livingston.

Thus God honors his people. "Draw nigh to me, and I will draw nigh to you," is his language. When with importunity and humble faith they present their prayer before him, he will bestow the promised blessing. Witness Jacob at Peniel, "greatly afraid and distressed," because of the anger of his offended brother. "For I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children." Then none could deliver save He who had said to him, "Return to thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." The God of Abraham and of Isaac was the God of Jacob too. He listened to his pleading servant, yielded to the importunity of his struggling soul, and granted the blessing asked.

Israel's God still hears the cries of his children when pleading for those they love; and when Christians with holy fervor pray for perishing sinners, God is pleased to draw near, and subdue rebellious hearts unto himself. It is instructive to note how, when God is about to revive his work in any place, he begins it by imparting to his people a spirit of prayer, attended with deep humiliation and self-abasement. "In those days, and in that time," saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come; they and the Children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten." "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."

About the year 1825, a clergyman* visited the churches of East Tennessee, and proposed to them to observe what was called "the twilight concert of prayer," with reference to the revival of religion. Most of the churches visited agreed to observe this concert. Where the family could come together at the hour proposed, they would then have their evening worship, and in connection with that exercise, pray for the revival of the cause of God, and the conversion of sinners. When it was not convenient for the family to assemble, each pious member of it, in the closet, on the journey, or wherever he might be, alone would lift up his earnest prayers to God for the salvation of souls. Thus, over a very considerable extent of country, from evening to evening, a vast volume of prayer ascended to the throne of God. And "God, merciful and gracious," heard the cries of his children. In answer to their petitions, he caused the influences of his Spirit to descend, "as showers that water the earth." And the wilderness and solitary place were made to rejoice and bloom as the garden of the Lord. Every church that observed this concert shared richly in the Divine blessing. The entire result can never be known until "the Lord himself shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this and that man was born there."

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* Rev. N. Patterson.

It is by imparting a spirit of prayer that God begins a work of grace in the sinner's heart. Of Saul of Tarsus it was said: "Behold he prayeth," and his prayer was heard by his compassionate Redeemer. Thus was it with the publican; thus with the dying thief; thus with Cornelius, and thus has it been with multitudes in later times—thus is it to-day. "Then the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of men is made low, and the Lord alone is exalted in that day." "I heard it, but I heeded it not," said a man of a proud spirit; "I heard again, but I hated it as if it were death. And once more I heard it, and my spirit melted. It was as if God himself, with the resistless might of his infinite love, spoke to my inner spirit. I was transfixed. Wonder, fear, hope, shame, grief, love, joy, sprang up in my soul. I wept like a child; and kneeling down before my Saviour and God, with trembling awe, I confessed my sins and sought his forgiveness."

My hearers, are you accustomed to pray? I ask not you, my Christian brethren. No *Christian* can *live* without prayer. I put the question to others here. Do you *pray*, my friends? It may be that you do not. Possibly some of you, instead of calling upon your Maker in humble prayer, confessing your sins and seeking his pardoning mercy, use his name profanely. Beware! Soon you will be called to confront that God by whose favor you have lived; but whose goodness you have abused, the riches of whose grace you have despised, whose authority you have treated with bold or careless contempt, whose holy name you have profaned? How painful the thought of your coming to a dying hour, your peace not yet made with Him so soon to be your Judge! What an inestimable privilege, *then*, to be permitted to draw nigh to Him, as to your reconciled Father. But fear has taken hold on you. You know not how to approach unto him.

In conclusion,—*Remember*, all ye who neglect or refuse to ask God for his mercy, he assures you you may call upon him when it is too late—call when he will not answer—seek him early, but not find him. Be wise, therefore, I beseech you—to-day. Defer not the work of your soul's salvation. Lest on that awful day, when the heavens and the earth shall flee at the presence of Jehovah, you who have refused to answer when God called, and refused to call while God waited to answer, shall, in your terror and dismay, *vainly* call upon the mountains and the rocks to fall on you, and hide you from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

The Lord God, who hears prayer, draw you by his love, and save you from the sinners' doom, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

* * *

BELIEVING AGAINST APPEARANCES.

In order to make his children trust solely in him, God sometimes deprives them of the sensible effects of faith on which they were too much inclined to depend. Your experience under these circumstances may be somewhat similar to that of Paul when he said, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead." The object of God's dealings with you is revealed. You must not trust in yourself. All self-righteousness must fall before the cross, like Dagon before the Ark. Doubtless you have still some self within you. You are seeking self under the garb of humility, and amid these general lamentations over your miseries, which instead of directing your eyes to the Saviour, are perhaps turning them away from him. To deliver you from this delusion, God removes all your consolations, so that you may be obliged to walk simply by faith, and to hope, resting exclusively on the promises.

When you trust thus in God, you are, even when in the most desponding state, not less acceptable to him, than if you were full of joy and love. Doubtless a heart full of love and joy is an inestimable blessing, when at the same time we rest our hope of salvation and our confidence in the merits of Christ alone. Nevertheless, I know not if there be anything more honoring to God, than the state of that man, who, feeling the depth of his misery, finding in himself nothing to rest upon, conscious of nothing but emptiness, weakness, and opposition to the will of God, rests upon the promise of God and gives him glory, saying, "God cannot lie: Hath he said and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken and shall he not bring it to pass?"

They whose faith is condemned in God's Word, are they who believed against all appearances, and in opposition to all discouragements. Abraham is commended because, "not being weak in faith, he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Noah is commended, because upon the testimony of God, he believed contrary to all appearances, in the coming of the deluge, and for one hundred and twenty years continued to give credit to the threatenings of God, notwithstanding the apparent delay of the execution. Paul commends those who died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them. Christ commended the faith of the woman of Canaan, who persevered in following him, notwithstanding the apparent coldness with which he treated her at first. "O woman, great is thy faith!"

On the other hand, the faith of Thomas, who required to see and feel before he believed, was not commended. "Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."

We learn likewise from the history of the Israelites, that they who believe only what they see and feel and touch, neither believe nor rejoice for any length of time. They soon dishonor God by their despondency, and bring upon themselves his displeasure. When Israel saw the power of God displayed against the Egyptians, "When the waters covered their enemies and there was none left of them, then they believed his word and sang praises," but the Spirit adds, "they soon forgot his works and waited not for his counsel." As soon as some new difficulty presented itself in the wilderness, their faith wavered, "they turned their backs and tempted God, and limited the Holy one of Israel. They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy." Hence far from commending their faith the Spirit of God says, "Therefore the Lord heard this and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation."

Let that unbelieving and rebellious people teach us not to tempt the Lord on every occasion, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Let us cleave unto the Lord with a steadfast heart, knowing in whom we have believed. Let us dismiss as injurious to his faithfulness, all discouraging thoughts which may arise in our minds, when the Lord, to prove us, makes us to encamp like Israel in dry places; let us press onwards, persuaded, that he who hath called us is faithful, and will not suffer us to perish by the way. Like Hezekiah, let us trust in the Lord, let us cleave to him, and not turn away from him.—*From the French of Rachat.*

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST PURGING THE CONSCIENCE.

When the gifted and eloquent John Randolph was on his death-bed, after communing with his secret thoughts for some time he suddenly roused himself and exclaimed, in his own shrill and piercing tone, "Remorse!" And again he repeated the word "Remorse, Remorse!" "Write it down," said he to an attendant, "and let me see it." "Remorse!" Ah, there was a fire kindled upon the soul of the orator and the statesman, which no effort of his own was able to quench! Conscience of sin! Conscience awakened by the power of the Holy Spirit! Conscience startled by finding itself on the very verge of eternity! Conscience now mingled its upbraidings with the alarms of the divine law. There was no power to stifle its voice, nor to flee from it, nor to endure it. If strength of intellect, if enlarged and liberal views, if courage, or fortitude, or pride, or lofty self-respect and self-reliance, could do anything for man in such a condition, they could have done it for him. But no man's hands can be strong, nor his heart endure, if left unaided to contend against the workings of a guilty and awakened conscience. God has written in our hearts a natural presentiment of his own inexorable justice; and his revealed law amply corroborates these premonitions of our hearts. The Lord is holy and will by no means clear the guilty. While men slumber in delusion and hardness of heart they may dream that God is too good to punish; or that repentence will sufficiently appease his justice. But when the Holy Ghost convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, all these delusions vanish. There is no longer a hope of mercy, save in a way in which God "*may be just*," while he justifies the sinner. Nature herself cries out for some *atonement*, some *propitiation;* and for this reason, the very heathen, not knowing Him "whom God had set forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood," resort to penances, self-torturings, and sacrifices. In this the conduct of the heathen as well as of the deluded Papist, shows that a *propitiation for sin* is among the wants of the soul. This was shadowed forth in all sacrifices and offerings of the Jewish law. Repentance is not enough; "without the shedding of blood there is no remission. There must be some sacrifice, some atonement for sin. Yet after all penances and sacrifices that man can offer, there still remains conscience of sin. No offerings, not even the blood of bulls and of goats, divinely prescribed in the Jewish ritual, can take away sin, or make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. Only one sacrifice has power to "*purge the conscience* from dead works to serve the living God," and that is, "the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God." This only can take away sin, and place the sinner as just before the divine law. This only can relieve the conscience from the load and fear of guilt. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect: for then would they not have ceased to be offered? *because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*" But "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus once for all," who "after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God"—"for by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience*, and our bodies washed with pure water."

This, and this alone, can reconcile us to God. This and this alone can give peace to the troubled conscience.

We shall be wise always to bear with us the remembrance of the irrepressible, inevitable, unendurable power of conscience. It is a part of our being. It will accompany us beyond the grave. It will be our companion forever. Its accusations we can never elude. Its testimony we can never corrupt. The bonds under which it holds us we can never evade. Before its tribunal we must stand for ever. Its condemnation is the sentence of God. Place us in security ever so complete against human laws, this holds us in adamantine chains. Be our offences ever so secret from man, before conscience they are in clear light as before the eye of God. The prisoner in the dungeon, the prince on the throne, the beggar cast out in distress and sorrow, and the rich man amid his millions of wealth, are equally under its power. *We must do right.* If not, the fires of conscience within us, and the justice of God upon us, bind us to eternal punishment. And when the stain of guilt is upon the conscience, nothing can ever wash it away, save the atoning blood of Christ. He that believeth not *must* be damned.—*Rev. Edwin Hall, D.D.*

THE SINNER A ROBBER.

1. Great numbers can accuse him of robbery. For he robs God of services due him, Christ of faith and love, and the Holy Spirit of due regard. He robs his family of religious influence, the world of an holy example, the church of power he might employ in her service.

2. He commits robbery upon his best friends. Other robbers spare their friends, but not the sinner. He has no greater friends than the Father of mercies, and the kind Saviour, and the ever-blessed Comforter. But he invades the rights of them all.

3. And he robs them of the most precious things. The most valuable jewels in the sight of the above named friends, are the affections of the human heart. But the sinner hesitates not a moment to appropriate them all to himself. God is despoiled of them all.

4. He is a very bold robber. His crimes have been denounced by the Supreme Magistrate of the universe, and the most terrible penalties have been recorded, and have been set before his eyes, and made to ring in his ears. Indeed he has been, at times, not a little scorched by sparks of the Divine vengeance against his robberies; but he braves every threatening, and boldly faces every danger attending his course.

5. A most persevering robber is the sinner. He began very young, and kept steadily on through all the years of childhood and youth. Many reach manhood and go down into the vale of years, robbing all the way through. Nothing stops them. Promises, threatenings, mercies, judgments—all alike fail to stop the steady perseverance of the robber I am describing.—*New-York Evangelist.*

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SERMON DXCIV.

BY REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.,

OF NEW-YORK.

"TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?" OR, THE CHURCH MEMBER IN DOUBT AND DISTRESS.

> "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."—John vi. 66-68.

The text sets before us two classes of men, and the different decisions which they formed in regard to an adherence to the person and precepts of Jesus Christ.

There comes a time in the moral history of every individual, when a determinate decision is to be formed, either to separate himself from Christ, walking no more with him, or to apply to him more earnestly, cleave to him more closely as the soul's Redeemer. Happy are those who, when the hour of temptation comes, and the question is urged, "Will ye also go away?" can honestly answer as did Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

There is a class of persons who are seldom or never made the subjects of direct address and appropriate instruction from the sacred desk. It *consists of those within the enclosures of the church who have come to an intelligent conviction that they have neither part nor lot in the kingdom of Christ.* We do not remember to have heard a single discourse which was suited to the condition of such. No treatise with which we are acquainted addresses such exclusively, and furnishes them with that information which is specially appropriate to their case. Often do the ministers of religion insist on the danger of self-deception, and paint, as do the Scriptures, the fearful doom of the hypocrite. Frequently do they exhibit the tests of Christian character, and unfold the rules and evidences by which any man may pronounce upon his pretensions to the Christian name. But the persons of whom we now speak are by no means self-deceived, neither are they acting the part of hypocrisy. By the employment of those very tests with which they are furnished, have they been led to decide unfavorably concerning themselves. They write gloomy things against themselves. They have come to feel that they are not, and never were true Christians. They have abandoned their hope. They are not a little disheartened because of their condition. They know not what to do.

When men of the world who have never professed to be any thing besides are addressed, they feel that their own state differs from such in many material points. They are already within the church. They are reputed to be Christians. At times they may be ready to wish that they were out of the church, occupying the same place which they did before they entered it. They are inclined to think that it would be better for themselves if it could be so. But now that they are already known as the professed disciples of Christ, many things combine to perplex them concerning the course which it would be proper for them to pursue. Shall they publicly confess that they are strangers to religion? Shall they withdraw from the church, erase their names from its records, and hereafter neglect its ordinances? This they fear to do, though at times they are almost forced to the act. Shall they remain as they are; pass through the forms of religion with conscience against them; organize their lives on the general principle of a reputable morality, and for the rest abide the issue? Their condition demands our profound concern. If the truth were known, many more would be found in this state than we have ever imagined.

To such as are ready to admit that they belong to this description of persons, I would say,

1. In the first place, *look diligently, cautiously, intelligently into the reasons* which lead you to such a decision. Is it with good reason, or otherwise, that you so judge in reference to yourself? It is possible that you are mistaken in your judgment, and need only to be corrected. Perhaps your gloomy opinion may be the result of a constitutional cautiousness of mind, or improper conceptions of the gospel of Christ, or depression of the animal spirits in consequence of bodily infirmity, disease, or other cause. The mere absence of all hope does not render it certain that you have no good ground to hope. There may be the very best evidence of Christian character where there is no happy hope, just as truly as there may be a confident hope where there are no evidences to justify it. Doubts concerning one's own piety often indicate a healthy condition of the conscience. They

imply anxiety and discrimination, and a desire to know the truth; and when compared with their opposite, a self-confident and presumptuous habit, are infinitely to be preferred. Great sensibility to pain is not the most dangerous symptom in disease.

A deep feeling of *unworthiness* is no evidence that you are not in your right place. You are mistaken if you suppose that any other feeling is becoming in one who hopes to be saved only by the mercy of Jesus Christ. You may possess the most profound sense of your personal unworthiness, and be ready to admit that all others are better than you; that there is no one more undeserving the privilege of being admitted to Christian ordinances: this feeling may be daily deepening and extending, and of itself presents no good reasons which should debar you from the table of Christ. You have been subject to great misapprehension, if you have ever supposed that you should feel otherwise, or have wished to feel otherwise; for no other feeling is becoming in one who trusts in the cross of Christ.

It may be, therefore, when better informed on these points, and exercising a more impartial discrimination, that you will find much reason to hope on your own account. On the other hand, if it be true that upon an intelligent survey of the evidences of Christian character; after making all possible allowances and exceptions in your favor, which a sound and pious judgment will permit; after the most careful and honest scrutiny into the motives and emotions of your heart, you come to the rational conviction that you have never been renewed by the Spirit of God; then to you I say,

2. Be grateful to God *that your eyes have been opened* to see your true condition before it was too late. This is a mercy which few appreciate. We have reason to believe that of those who enter the church on earth with hearts deceived and unchanged, few are ever brought to true and saving repentance. We think we see many reasons why it must be so. Many influences there are, whose natural effect is to perpetuate that delusion and confirm that impenitence. There is the manner in which that entrance was effected. It was upon examination. Those in whose piety and judgment all confidence has been reposed, pronounced favorably upon their qualifications for admission to Christian fellowship. These persons were questioned by the teachers of religion; the elders of the people looked into their experience, and they were ready to welcome them to the table of Christ. In consequence of this, it is not to be denied that there is a sense of security which is likely to endanger and ruin such as were self-deceived, when official judgment was thus given in their favor. Deceived they will, on this account, be likely to remain.

There is another influence at work which tends to the same result. There is a public separation made between the church and the world. It is visible; it is recognized by all the appeals which are made by God's ambassadors. By a very natural process, there is a corresponding distribution and partition made by such persons, each for himself. The professed disciple appropriates to himself whatever is designed for the consolation and blessedness of the people of God. Whatever is said concerning the guilt and danger of impenitence, and the necessity of conversion, is conducted off from himself to those who are confessedly in an impenitent state. Such appeals were not designed for him. They were intended for the great body of unbelieving men. There is a shield over his heart and conscience, through which the arrows of the Lord do not pass. A sense of security is generated by this habit, which we have reason to fear is but seldom effectually disturbed. Not as likely is he, on this account, to apply the truth which is really appropriate to his case.

Besides all this, there is the certain effect produced upon the character by a participation in Christian ordinances, and the enjoyment of peculiar privileges. Very solemn it is to sit down at the table of Christ. It is a very solemn thing to put to one's lips the cup which symbolizes the blood that was shed for our salvation, and to eat of the bread which reminds us of the body which was pierced and broken on the cross. What scene more impressive, more awful, more tender, more fitted in every way to subdue and break the heart, can ever occur in the present life? We look in vain for any thing more powerful to affect us than this. But what if one participates therein with a heart unchanged? Is there not an effect produced upon his character which is absolutely fearful? Does he not acquire a power of resistance to truth, and love, and motives, which leave us little to hope? While his sense of security has been deepening, has not his heart really been growing hard proportionably fast? We cannot doubt it. We cannot conceal it from ourselves that there are reasons why those who are admitted to the number of God's people with hearts deceived and impenitent, will probably continue in that state forever. We cannot but tremble when we admit the probability, that of those who eat and drink unworthily, very few are ever awakened and converted.

Therefore it is that we say to you who have been brought to an intelligent conviction, that you have no evidences of conversion, though in the bosom of the church; that you have reason to thank God for his mercy in having dispelled your delusions, broken up your security, and brought you to a knowledge of yourself. You might have slept on, and deceived yourself as do others, till life was all over. The Spirit of God has not deserted you. You are not given up to believe a lie. God is still waiting to be gracious to you; and the proof of it is already before you for your encouragement.

3. It is important for you to understand, in the next place, that you cannot *retreat to the world.* You cannot go back; you can *not exclude yourself* from the church. Upon this point there

are many prevalent errors, both of opinion and practice. Many who like you have come to the conviction that they never knew any thing of true religion, have resolved that they would silently withdraw from the communion of the church. They absent themselves from the Lord's table. They perhaps give no more attendance on the ordinances of the Lord's house. Convinced that they are strangers to piety, they consider this a good reason why they should, of their own accord, retire from Christian fellowship.

All such are under a palpable mistake. There are none appointed in the Church of Christ to grant permission to any who may desire it, to withdraw and return again to the world. No man within the church has the right to assume this permission for himself. The Scriptures recognize but two ways in which any communicant can ever be removed from the church on earth. The one is by the direct agency of God himself. Death removes one after another, and takes them into eternity. But death does not absolve any one from his solemn vows; he transfers the true Christian to the church in glory, to abide there forever. The other method is by exclusion because of offences. For the preservation of her own purity, the continuance of her own institutions, as well as the discipline and recovery of her own members, the church has been invested with the power of cutting off such as offend and will not be reclaimed. When admonition has failed, and all suitable efforts have been frustrated, then is the church required, in the name of her great Lord and Head, to pronounce such excluded from all Christian rights and privileges. Ever after, unless they repent and return, such are to be held as heathen men and publicans. Other than the two methods which I have now described, death by the agency of God himself, and exclusion in the manner and for the reasons which have been defined by our Lord himself, there is no way of being disconnected from the church of the living God. He is subject to a great misapprehension who supposes that he may withdraw at his own pleasure.

For, in the first place, such a withdrawal, if it could be permitted, would not absolve one from the vows which have already been made. Once made, they can never be retracted or broken. The language of the church to such as come to the Lord's table is in substance: "Let it be impressed on your minds that you have entered into solemn relations which you can never renounce, and from which you can never escape. Wherever you go, they will be upon you. They will follow you to the bar of God; and in whatever world you may be fixed, will abide on you to eternity. You can never be again as you have been. You have voluntarily, publicly, and unalterably committed yourselves, and henceforth you *must* be the servants of God." There is no retreat, no retirement, no crowd, no cavern, no *island of the sea, no spot* in all the creation of God to which you may betake yourself, where the solemnity and obligation of these vows will not rest upon you. Retrogression, therefore, is not to be thought of for one instant.

Besides all this, if you are not a Christian now, your obligation to be a Christian is not diminished in the least by any change in your outward circumstances and relations. You cannot escape from that duty. It is omnipresent, like the air you breathe. Are not the crowds of living men, heedless, impenitent though they be, under obligation to believe and obey from the heart? Does not God lay righteous claim to their services? Ought they not to be the disciples of Jesus Christ? Will not their guilt be great, and their punishment intolerable, if they refuse? Is it to such that you would think of withdrawing? Withdraw from what? Not surely from responsibility. Not from the duty to be from the heart a believer in Jesus. Had you the wings of the morning, you could not fly beyond the reach and jurisdiction of this equitable requirement. To retire from the church, even if it were permitted, would not lessen your obligations, or lighten their pressure, or diminish their solemnity, or absolve you from the moral government of God.

Withdraw from the church! To what would you go? To the world again? To the unbelief and heedlessness of impenitent men? But this is to rush upon a certain destruction. To such, nothing remains but a looking-for of judgment which shall devour the adversaries. Hope there is none in that quarter. Absolutely certain is it, that all such as obey not the gospel of God will be visited with tribulation and anguish. To go back, is to go back to perdition. There is nothing in a state of unbelief which can comfort your heart or illuminate your prospects. To go back to the world, is to go back to infamy and death. Retreat is cut off. Whatever is to be done, we cannot go back, unless we have made an agreement with hell, and with death are in covenant, and the last hope has gone out, and our resolution is formed to meet our inevitable fate in the sullenness of despair. It is not so with you. Evident is it, then, that you must hope for relief from another quarter; instead of retreating, you must advance. You are shut up to an onward movement. You can move only in one way. True wisdom it is to say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

When convinced of this, the next direction is obvious.

4. Begin now, begin anew *those very acts which are necessary to pardon and life*, in the case of those who have made no pretensions to religion. It is a great mistake, into which many fall, to suppose that when the hope of forgiveness is once obtained, then they are no more concerned with that class of truths which are addressed to those in an impenitent state. It is to be received as a general rule of great practical importance, *for all to continue* to hear and repent and pray, just as if these

duties were now required for the first time. There are some qualifications and limits to this rule, no doubt, but these are such as the fulness of one's religious experience will readily suggest; but that it is a direction both safe and wise cannot be questioned. Edwards, than whom few men have known so much of the complexities and varieties of Christian experience, insisted much on this rule in his day; and had it always been adopted and applied, there would have been less of delusion and disappointment.

You consider yourself an unconverted man. You are convinced that you have never experienced a saving faith in Christ. Admit it. Be it so, that there is no mistake in your judgment. *Act now on this conviction.* Surely you cannot be in doubt as to what you must do. Your past professions, your standing in the church cannot change the direction which are addressed to all in an impenitent state. Like any other unconverted man, you must cry out, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me. The motives to do this, and to do it speedily, are more numerous and pressing in your case than in any other. You must begin at the very point where you would begin had you never had a hope before. You must open your eyes to behold your own sinfulness. You must be careful that you grieve not the Spirit of God which has come to convince you of the truth. You must set yourself to rehearse your obligations violated, and sins indulged. You must bow down, confess, and plead for pardon. Oh, repent of thy wickedness; if you did not go far enough before, come now and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. If there was some secret thing before which prevented you from closing quite with the only Saviour of sinners, be sure that there is nothing now. If you were only almost persuaded to be a Christian before, be altogether persuaded now. If you failed of entering the kingdom of God before only by *a little*, be sure that you now enter quite within. If in your first approaches to the Master you kept back part of the price, now come and give him your all. I know of no other terms of salvation than these. I know of no other conditions of return and acceptance. These are suited to all the varieties of an impenitent state. To men of every grade and character, under whatever name they pass, of whatever appearance, the same direction is to be given: Repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

I am not ignorant of what may be regarded as the peculiarities of your case; I know what distrust, what difficulty, what fear, what agitations of soul you must experience. I know to what temptations of the great foe you will be exposed; what deceits, what diversion, what delays, what hindrances, he will employ with his extremest skill, to prevent your cordial acceptance of pardon. Of these, none will he be so sure to try, as the fear that in your *case pardon will not* be granted. If possible he will make you think that your guilt is of such a character that you cannot expect to be forgiven. My last direction accordingly is,

5. Be confident of this, that if you ask for mercy on the same terms in which all must plead for it, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, *you will be forgiven.* It is true, that your sin has been very great in having rejected the Saviour so long, and under such peculiar circumstances; but there is no sin which a God of infinite mercy cannot forgive, if it be repented of. That you could have passed through such privileges, looked upon the body and blood of Christ with a heart unsubdued, ungrateful, is indeed a great aggravation of your guilt; but there is no degree or amount of iniquity which atoning blood cannot wash away, if the penitent spirit will but ask for its application. To eat and drink unworthily is not the unpardonable sin. To take of the bread and of the cup with a heart deceived and unchanged. does not of itself seal one's damnation. There is no sin which cannot be pardoned if it be confessed and forsaken. We must never suffer ourselves to think that there is any kind, or quality, or amount of sin, though it be high as mountains, and dyed deep as crimson blood, which God is not both able and willing to forgive. Broad, deep, and full as the sea, his mercy can roll over a world of sin, and wash away a world of iniquity. His offers of mercy are made to you as really as to any other; his promises are just as sure in your case as in any other; and if you have been a stranger to true peace and hope before, you may come, if you will, and try the efficacy of a Saviour's blood applied to your conscience now. There is no sin which is unpardonable if it be repented of. The sin which excludes one from mercy both in this life and that which is to come, is such a resistance to the Holy Ghost as makes repenting impossible.

With you the Spirit of God seems to be striving now. That very thing which it is his peculiar province to do, he is now doing with you. He is convincing you of your sin; he is showing you your need of a Saviour: he is pointing you to the cross, —he is moving you to repentance. And if there be one person on earth whose condition more than any other awakens the pity and tenderness of the Redeemer of sinners, it seems to me it is the professor of religion who has come at length to be convinced that he is not a Christian: who dare not go back: who is afraid to go forward; who, though called a disciple before, yet having denied and forsaken his Master, is now weeping bitterly over his sin, and for the first time longs to lay his head at the Saviour's feet, and bathe them with tears which cannot be feigned.

SERMON DXCV.

BY REV. WILLIAM ADAMS, D.D.,

OF NEW-YORK.

THE GOOD WOMAN.

"Who can find a a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry: her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."—PROVERBS xxxi. 10–31.

"The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him."

It is impossible to say who Lemuel was. Some have conjectured that this was another name for Solomon. Whoever he may have been he was singularly fortunate in his mother; for the words which she taught him are worthy of that imperishable record they have received from the pen of inspiration. Well would it be for the world if every mother was qualified to give, and every son disposed to follow similar advice in the selection of a wife.

An inspired description have we here of a *good woman.* Circumstances, customs, habits change; men and manners pass away; but the qualities of a good character are the same in all times and places. What was essentially good and praiseworthy in an Arabian tent three thousand years ago, is good and praiseworthy now, and will be to the end of time.

Art has toiled these many centuries to paint on canvass and embody in marble every conception of the beautiful and graceful in the female face and form. Poetry has rivalled her sister muse in the same *endeavor; the* world is full of fancy and romance on this subject; but here have we a portrait, executed by no mortal hand, and though it be not often held up in the christian pulpit, we do well to study it, for correct ideas concerning it, take a deeper and stronger hold of the very roots of society than the superficial may imagine.

The description before us makes little of personal beauty, but everything of that higher beauty which adorns the soul. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but she that feareth the Lord shall be praised." Nevertheless the language of Scripture on this subject is not cynical. God has made us with a principle of taste, and everything which gratifies it confers pleasure. It is misanthropy and not religion which scowls at the beautiful. A quick eye has the latter to admire all which God has finished in his wisdom.

But in contrast with goodness, which is the beauty of the soul, how vain, how worthless is every personal attraction, belonging not all to our choice or character, and so placed outside the domain of virtue. The fairest form which God has made, the richest bloom which beauty ever spread over the human face, one sharp attack of disease may spoil it; an accident may blight it; age surely will cause it to fade; the worm will revel on it, and corruption destroy it; but the beauty of the soul which is nurtured by religion is removed beyond the reach of accident or decay, is increased and not lessened by the flight of years, and attains its fullest bloom and immortality only when the body has returned to ashes. The substance of this whole chapter is epitomized in the New Testament:

"Whose adorning let it not be that which is outward—plaiting of hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price;" a beauty which God himself admires.

That which is good essentially is good relatively, and the portraiture which is here given of a good woman is taken from her domestic relations; her great and proper sphere of *home*. The greediest ambition which ever coveted honor, power and distinction, might be satisfied with that just measure of influence which is exerted within this vast domain—for the world will always be as are its homes; and the presidency of this domestic retreat where characters are formed, is committed by God to the virtuous woman. Emulous of no celebrity, covetous of no distinction, shrinking even from political publicity, as flowers fold themselves from the intense blaze of the sun, the good wife and mother contents herself with those household duties by which, in fact, generations are moulded, and the destinies of the great world are fixed. This is the most obvious feature of the inspired description upon which we are now entering. There is no truthfulness in it at all, if home be not the theatre of the virtuous woman.

Two things accordingly are implied in it on her part. That she should not *despise* it, and that she should not *shrink* from it.

The desire to be something we are not, and to get something we have not, is the great sinning of our nature, and the most adroit and perilous temptation to which a woman can ever be subject, especially if she be endowed with extraordinary talents, is presented in the idea that she was intended for something better and greater than domestic cares; that it is neither justice nor dignity to fritter away her life in giving heed to a thousand small and nameless avocations which menials might do as well; against which falsity the only antidote is a correct view of that honored kingdom which Providence has ordained for her, and the magnitude of those duties which Scripture has specified and enjoined.

While she must not undervalue her sphere, neither let her *shrink* from it. Let no gift of fortune, no love of ease, no desire of indulgence be an absolution from those duties which are her own personal and unalienable responsibility. Let her never be tempted to believe that she has no special obligation as to the interior concerns of her household; that these may be neglected or delegated to others without criminality in herself; and should cares multiply, and weariness and perplexity afflict her, instead of fleeing from them, let her faithfully meet them, remembering that these furnish as real an occasion for resolution, energy and heroism as any probation can display.

It may be somewhat difficult to apply the prism to the brilliant rainbow which the hand of inspiration has here arched, so as to separate in a distinct analysis the several virtues which together form one perfect character. Yet some of these appear to have received a special prominence and coloring for the very reason, we believe, that they are apt to be undervalued or overlooked. Yet are they of immense importance in their direct and indirect consequences.

The most comprehensive of these is a general *prudence and discretion.* This forms the very woof and warp of the character here described. This is a generic quality, displaying itself in a great variety of particulars. She manages her domestic concerns with such consummate care and prudence that the heart of her husband doth *safely trust in her.* Something more is here intended than confidence in her affection and virtue. The entrance of the least suspicion in these respects, is enough to poison the transcendent delights of domestic life, and the first look or word which gives occasion to jealousy and distrust converts the paradise of home into the misery of hell. A relic truly of the paradise which is lost is the perfect trust which a man reposes in her who presides over his home. A help and a blessing is it for him to know that whoever else may disappoint or deceive him, there is one who is true and faithful in whom he may *always trust; how*ever others may misunderstand

and judge him, there is one so completely identified with his life, that in her he may confide as in his own conscious self.

But it is with a very common-place exhibition of this general virtue that our domestic description of a good woman is chiefly occupied, and the importance of it in a religious point of view will be obvious very soon. Regarding her household duties as the proper sphere of her fidelity, she conducts them with prudence, economy, discretion, consulting the true interest, and advantage, and honor of her husband. With no interest separate from his, she directs the domestic department of their joint life with such wisdom and discretion that he is happily satisfied and content. He confides to her hands the means of expenditure, knowing that she will show neither meanness nor extravagance.

There is an expression in this passage before us which is very suggestive: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he *shall have no need of spoil*." So much of prudence doth she display in her domestic economy, that he is under no temptation to do a hard or dishonorable thing. There is lurking in many a mind a false notion about economy and extravagance which I verily believe has done more to embitter domestic peace, and ultimately destroy character, than any other; it is an unnatural association between economy and meanness, and between extravagance and generosity. Many a man has been ruined for time and for eternity by this falsity gliding insensibly into his domestic arrangements. Let there be in his home an ambition for display, a covetousness for articles of luxury, an emulation in the career of fashion, a passion which grows the more it is indulged; let there be a purpose to gratify this craving without due regard to ability and propriety, and the certain result you would expect would be an expenditure exceeding his means, an unnatural stimulation in his habits of business; unwise and hazardous speculations; at length projects dishonest and fraudulent, followed by suspicion, exposure, bankruptcy, ruin and despair. So many cases of this description have there been—so many wrecks of fortune, of hope, and of character, the true origin of which was in ambition and extravagance at home, that it is not to be wondered at that the word of God insists so much on this virtue of discretion and prudence in domestic economy. While some have been instigated to deeds of folly and of crime by that domestic extravagance which is here rebuked, how often has the character of a man been saved, and fortunes repaired by that discretion which presides over his household. Harrassed in business, perplexed in his affairs, just ready to abandon all to a general ruin, he comes home to her in whom his heart safely trusts, and instead of reproach and sullen grief over fading hopes, a cheerful discretion is there for his counsellor; a prudent economy is prompt in its suggestions; measures of relief are joyfully commenced under his own roof, and he recovers *his heart* and his foot-hold by the noble heroism, perhaps, sacrifices of her who doeth him good and not evil all the days of his life. Show me a man beginning life with none of this religious prudence in his home, but in its stead, neglect, imprudence, and extravagance, and you see a man with the saddest prospects of disappointment, dishonesty, irreligion, crime and destruction.

It is obvious, on the very face of this passage, and every traveller in the Eastern hemisphere has observed the same, that among oriental nations it is common for women to take a more direct and immediate part in the management of business than our occidental customs allow. She is here represented as buying and selling, as concerned in merchandize and in vineyards, and, in general, as being more actively engaged in her husband's affairs, than any thing which is known to us. Nothing is so hopeless of change as national customs. While in the East we might judge the error was in one extreme, we are quite disposed to believe that we of the West misjudge in the opposite direction. If a virtuous woman is so discreet in her domestic domain, why may not her discretion be of immense value in affairs now seldom or never submitted to her judgment? We have often thought that it would be more for one's prosperity and permanent good in every regard, if, when stimulated by the excitement of trade, venturing in the exhilirations of brilliant speculations, into the regions of peril, he would oftener avail himself of the calmer judgment of her in whom his heart trusteth. There is an instinct which is sometimes safer than the reason, and the tranquillity of domestic retirement is more favorable for that quick intuition which is wiser than argument, and better than demonstration. Many a man would have been saved from deplorable shipwreck, if he had but once consulted the discretion of his wife, before entering upon an illusive project, or plunging into a ruinous speculation.

There is another part of this description which is very important, an infusion of which into our national habits would occasion no evil, but much of good. Running through all this portrait there is a *glow and gleesomeness such as are imparted to physical exercise and activity.* The good woman is described as clothed with strength, and working willingly with her hands. There has, from some cause, sprung up a notion, and it is not necessary that we should trace the pedigree of the error—which associates work with vulgarity, and feminine delicacy and refinement with physical debility and inactivity. It is literally a heathen sentiment, and every motive of religion should be active for its extirpation. Health and happiness are inseparably related; nor is there one of the human race exempt from the law of Divine Providence, which makes some manner of occupation and exercise essential to the health alike of body and mind. A heresy is it, fatal to the temper, and so to domestic peace; fatal to the highest happiness (and there is no part of the world where it more abounds than among ourselves), that the very pink and perfection of *womanly delicacy is reached* just when it shades off into incipient consumption: when the forces of the body are sublimated away almost into ethereal essences; and removed just as far as possible from the necessities of vulgar exertion. Our very language is tainted with this poisonous sentiment. The word "*homely*," derived etymologically from the best of all words, *home*, and signifying simply what is "*domestic*," has, by insensible degrees, glided into the sense of "*inelegant*," "*coarse*," and "*rude*," as if homely occupations were to be discarded by such as are emulous of elegance and refinement.

Modes and methods of occupations vary with time and circumstances. But it is to be observed that this description of a good woman was given by the mother of a king, and that at a time when civilization culminated at the Jewish Court. So that if there were any absolved from this Providential law of physical activity, we might have expected to find them among those wearing soft raiment in the cedar palaces of Oriental Kings.

We say again, not a word does the Scripture utter against that which is becoming and beautiful in taste, for the very person here described maketh herself coverings of tapestry, and her clothing is silk and purple; a toilet which in material and arrangement is befitting her rank and station, yet this is the very one who, rising up while it is yet night, personally superintends the inmates and affairs of her household; strengthening her arms with cheerful work; and with all allowances as to modes of employment which changes of life require us to make, it is more than we can believe that inspiration should honor the counsel given by the mother of Solomon, "She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff," and that in these modern times there should be such a complete reversal of all laws as to justify the application to any class of the words of our Saviour, "They toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." The life of a flower or a bird cannot be a true model for an immortal being to imitate; nor can any one who has a just conception of what or how much is needful to perfect the comfort, adornment and attraction of a christian home, ever imagine that there can be any lacking of occupation, or that any one, even in the most affluent condition, who looketh well to the ways of her household, according to the spirit of this passage, will be compelled to eat the bread of idleness.

While there is a radiance given to this whole portraiture by the healthfulness and cheerfulness which proceed from active and useful occupation, the true charm of the character is an inward disposition. "She stretcheth out her hand to the poor, yea, she stretcheth out her hands to the needy." "She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness," and the crowning glory of all is, she *feareth the Lord*.

She is charitable in feeling, prudent in discourse, kind in *speech, and all* these are the fruits of that religious sentiment which is nurtured in the heart. This is the one thing needful and essential. All the prudence, the economy, the diligence which are here commended, are not for the gratification of selfishness—they are the offspring of duty, and are sacred oblations to God and man.

The individual who attendeth to the ways of her own household after the manner here described, you would expect to be charitable to the poor. Extravagance petrifies the heart. Ambition for display—devotion to fashion—leave a small space for any thought or care for the destitute. Everything which can be acquired is exhausted in personal indulgence; but she who is prudent from religious principle, hath not only a heart but an ability (for discretion guideth her impulses) to bless the needy. The most unnatural of all objects is a woman with every gift of fortune and grace of person, with no sympathy for those who are in want; nor is it the least of the many mischiefs of domestic extravagance, that it leads those who indulge in it to practice hard things in their dealings with the poor, of which humbler and more honest economy would be heartily ashamed.

Out of a heart filled with all sweetness proceeds a speech of kindness and wisdom. "In her tongue is the *law* of kindness." Not an occasional thing is it, now and then, to employ words of suavity—it is a law of her life, from which she knows not how to depart. An infringement of this rule would be more than a breach of conventional courtesy—even in her view a sin against God. A meek and a quiet spirit in the sight of God is her priceless ornament. She would not tarnish these celestial regalia by a word of peevishness, censorousness or calumny; and if there be any who are disposed after all to undervalue, among the many agencies of this great world, the influence of her whose life is in domestic retirement, we would humbly ask what agent there can be in all the world more powerful than the speech of a Christian woman, uniformly kind, uniformly discreet. The stern and sturdy nature of man is insensibly modified by it—as the face of the earth acknowledges the power of sun and dew. He may not define it; he cannot but feel it; he may not even think of it; but he is in fact altogether a different being from what he would have been without it. What a power is this of which a woman may be religiously covetous; by which the chafed and fretted spirit may be soothed, anger conquered by a smile, petulance unconsciously subdued by a word, and the roughness of life smoothed down for a whole household by an habitual kindness and cheerfulness.

More than this is implied in the description before us. The law of kindness in the tongue is one which is instructed of the Lord, and the speech which most honors it pertains to the precepts and practice of piety.

The good woman easily, wisely, habitually speaks to her household in honor *of true religion*. Think not that all her care and diligence are expended on the food and raiment of her children, for that would be to expose herself to the rebuke which our Lord pronounced upon her who was cumbered with much serving; the law of grace which is in her heart and upon her tongue will prompt her to those words of religious persuasion, which drop like the rain and distil as the dew; and in nothing will she display more of the wisdom and discretion, which are her power and success on all other subjects, than in so adapting her pious discourse to times, characters and circumstances, as to win assent and command respect, without the suspicion of art, arrogance or authority.

Set speeches on special occasions, with a great show and effort at wisdom, may repel and disgust; but how many have been moulded for time and eternity by that law of kindness which has been round about them like the air and light, and of which they are scarcely conscious until it be removed. Priceless above all rubies is that natural kindness of disposition and manners which divine grace has sweetened into a law of religious persuasion. How unnatural and perilous is that perversion which would employ the gift of speech in the sacred enclosures of domestic confidence exclusively on matters of form and attire, modes and accomplishments, to a neglect of those high and heavenly themes which affect the conscience, mature the principles, purify the affections, shape the character, and arbitrate eternal destinies.

If any one is disposed to ask for the profit and reward of this domestic fidelity, the answer is before us. Not to speak of the dignified satisfaction which must ever attend the effort to fill the station which Providence has appointed, there is another reward which outshines all the fame and wealth the world can ever bestow. She is surrounded by those who are the proofs and witnesses of her excellence. "Her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her." "Give her of the fruits of her hand, and let her own works praise her in the gates." Complain that woman is doomed to retirement and obscurity—that she is denied a part in the public applause of the world! What applause can goodness ever wish or value, save that which follows virtue unsought, as shadows follow the light.

If you would rectify the heresy, look at the honors large and imperishable which garland the head of domestic fidelity. Her works applaud her in the happiness, the success and the character of her household. Her praise is not in words of renown, not in the honor of official promotion, but in the lives of those who were fashioned by her influence. Her husband is known in the gates, not merely by the decencies and proprieties of his dress, revealing domestic care and taste, but by a thousand indescribable felicities of manner and conversation, cheerfulness and content, wisdom and discretion, which are the visible results of that invisible power, which has been to his character like the dews of heaven on the roots and branches of a tree.

If it were a topic admitting of public statement and discussion, it would be a curious subject for analysis; how much of the reputation and success of men whom the world delights to honor, are the direct product of that domestic companionship which has vitalized character, supplied its defects, rectified its faults, and gently and gradually pruned its excrescences. The world ascribes this success to accident or fortune; but they themselves know full well how different it would have been with them, what different men they would have been but for that discretion and kindness, which were the atmosphere of their homes. The perfume of costly ointment may be hid so that it shall not betray itself; but the influence of a virtuous woman will inevitably diffuse itself through the whole life and character of her husband, whether it be humble or honored.

Behold how her honors and rewards multiply as her children grow up into success, reputation and goodness. The fidelities of her whole nature have been expended upon their nurture, and her reward has come when she sees them around her, as men and women, practicing all the virtues, and inheriting all the excellencies which were the themes of her conversation and her example. Wonder not that the Roman matron, when the ladies of the court were displaying their jewels, pointed to her sons and said, "These are my jewels," for inspiration has mentioned it among the rewards of a virtuous woman, that her children rise up and call her blessed; no other decoration does she need —no amount of gold or jewels could add to her honors. Her highest praise is the good character of her obedient, grateful and affectionate children. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates. The good conduct of a household is the highest panegyric on her who has made it what it is. This is an honor to which there is no fading. Age and infirmities, so far from impairing and blighting, but add to it a new lustre. When personal beauty has faded into the sear and yellow leaf of life's autumn, the glory of the virtuous woman is approaching its climax. The unbought honors of filial gratitude and respect thicken around her declining days, and when she is dead she is not forgotten. Memory surrounds her name with a halo of virtues, and every success and honor of her children and children's children is her enduring monument. Every tear which the widow and the fatherless drop over her grave, as widows wept in the funeral chamber of Dorcas at the loss of a benefactress, is a better eulogium than oratory and of richer value than pearls and diamonds. Nor is it to be doubted, as I have dwelt on this theme, that many among my hearers have found their thoughts recalling the venerable form of their own mother, whether to their joy she be still lingering on earth amid the honors and beauties of a Christian old age, or whether to their grief she was long ago buried out of their sight; meditating upon those many virtues which made her to their infancy a sort of divinity; remembering the strong and sound sense which disciplined manners, mind and heart, the discretion which interpreted character and consulted disposition; the love which calmed and blessed; the confidence which no fault nor mistake could disturb; the piety which prayed, counselled and instructed, till each finds himself disposed to pour out his heart in gratitude before God for his descent from one so excellent; so that when he prays for himself he may plead the virtues of his parentage; adopting the very language which inspiration has prepared for his use—"*O Lord, I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid.*" How many have been disposed to adopt the beautiful sentiment of Cowper—

"My boast is not that I deduce my birth
From loins enthroned, or rulers of the earth,
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
The son of parents passed into the skies."

"HINDER ME NOT;" A SHORT SERMON.

"Hinder me not."—Gen. xxiv. 56.

So said Abraham's servant to the family of Laban, as they were trying to persuade him to tarry longer with them; and so should you say to every one and to every thing which would hinder you from yielding your heart to Christ. You may meet with many hindrances, but they all must be overcome by faith in Christ, with firmness and resolution. What are some of these HINDRANCES?

The *opposition of a wicked heart* hinders. "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Their sinful affections carry them away in a course of disobedience, and if they go not after iniquity in one form, they will in another. This, sinner, is your condition. You will not come to Christ. Your wicked heart keeps you away from him. You strengthen yourself against conviction; and for this, if you do not repent and believe the gospel, God will judge and condemn you.

The *persuasions of impenitent friends* hinder. They desire companions as unmoved and unconcerned as themselves. Does one of them by any means become serious, they ply him with every motive which can drive out the thoughts of God and a concern for his salvation. They soothe him with the deadly thought that he is in no danger, or the specious plea that there is time enough yet, that there is now no need of damping the *joys of life by the gloomy* subject of religion. Oh, how many are persuaded in this manner to turn from the path of uprightness, and to walk in the ways of darkness until their steps take hold on hell.

Ambition and love of earthly greatness hinder multitudes from submission to the Saviour. They cannot be content to be lightly esteemed and neglected for the sake of Christ. They will not forego the distinctions of earth for the approbation of God and the crown of glory which fadeth not away. They barter their souls for the miserable enjoyments of sinful pride, and in the end will lose both. "Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God."

The *cavils of unbelievers* hold many in doubt and suspense all their lives. They hear so many objections against the truth of the gospel, that they do not decide in its favor; and yet such are the convictions of reason and conscience, that they dare not decide against it. The caviller is ever busy in pointing out some imaginary flaw in the evidences of Christianity, some fancied absurdity in its truths, or inconsistency in the lives of its professors. His own dark deluded mind raises fancied difficulties where there are none in reality, and seeing everything through a mist, he imagines inconsistency, where all is light and harmony and glory in the view of those who love God. Like the serpent, the caviller strikes ere he is perceived in his true character, and the deadly poison is spreading through the unsuspecting soul, and sinking his victim in eternal ruin, before he is aware of his danger. Thousands are thus prevented from escaping for their life, and embracing the offers of mercy.

Others are hindered by *the ridicule of the openly vicious.* Ridicule is a weapon often hurled at the young and unguarded. Oh, what numbers are now lifting up their eyes in torment and wailing in hopeless despair, who, under the guidance of an evil heart, were brought to that world of woe by a banter or profane jest which they had not the moral courage to withstand, nor the wisdom to despise. Remember that ridicule is not argument; it proves nothing; it stabs in the dark. Shun him who would turn the realities of eternity into a jest, as you value your soul.

Others are hindered from trusting in Christ by *the cares and pleasures of the world.* Probably more souls are lost by yielding to the pressure of business, and the calls of vain pleasure and fashionable amusement, than by all other causes. Men of business, take heed lest, under the plea of being diligent in business, the soul be wholly given to this world and the "mammon of unrighteousness," and thus God be shut out, and the soul be lost. And ye follower of sinful pleasures, hear the declarations of God's word respecting such as you: "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." "Deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." 2 Tim. iii. : 4; Titus iii. : ; 1 Tim. v. : 6.

How then are we to OVERCOME these and all other hindrances to embracing Christ, and securing our salvation? Say to them unhesitatingly, " Hinder me not."

God commands your *immediate repentance and submission to Christ.* He says to you as to Lot, " Escape for thy life." "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "Submit yourselves therefore to God." In this urgent and forcible manner the Lord of heaven and earth commands you to turn to him. He who has made you, and given his Son to die for you, who claims your obedience by the most tender and overpowering obligations, bids you forsake your sins and embrace the Saviour.

Think of *the numerous mercies and favors* which God has bestowed upon you. How constantly has he preserved your lives from destruction. With what powers of mind has he endowed you, with which to love and serve him. What rich means of grace has he conferred upon you. How has he opened the way for you to come to him for salvation through the blood of his Son. And how has he followed you with the pleadings of his Spirit and of his word, saying to every sinner, as he said by the prophet to Israel, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby you have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." Ezek. xviii.: 30–32. Resolve in the strength of the Lord,

"Through duty and through trials too,
I'll go at his command;
Hinder me not, for I am bound
To Immanuel's blessed land."

Consider *the alarming providences* of God. A once blooming young woman, of high hopes, who had often joined in worldly scenes of dissipation, but who at last felt the chilling hand of death upon her, said, "Oh, what shall I do? I am not prepared to die. I have been such a sinner there is no mercy for me. Could I live to get well, I would make it my first business to obtain religion, to secure an interest in Christ; but I cannot attend to it now." These were her last words. In a few minutes she expired. Hasten your return to God, if you would not be arrested in a similar manner, and die without hope.

You have *a great work to do.* In matters of earthly business, men exert themselves according to the greatness of the work they have in hand. Thus, the long distance of Abraham's servant from home made him the more anxious to return immediately. You have a great work in hand; you are far from God, and far from that home which is eternal in the heavens. Turn, then, lest it be for ever too late. Seek the Lord Jesus Christ, believe in him, and begin a new life of loving obedience. If you grieve the Holy Spirit, and he leave you to your native blindness and obstinacy, you will never see the face of God as the God of grace. Fear will soon come upon you as desolation, and destruction as a whirlwind.

Let *the difficulties of the way* excite you to break through all hindrances at once. Dangers lurk in your path. The snares of the adversary are spread beneath your feet; the world without, and evil propensities within, like so many enemies, lie in wait to destroy your soul. These difficulties are already formidable, and by delay will soon become insurmountable. Hasten to the Lamb of God, without delay, or you will never enter the mansions of the blessed.

You are *intrusted with immortal interests*, with the care of the undying spirit. If saved, who can number its joys while the vast periods of eternity are passing on? If lost, who can count the billows of wrath which shall roll over it in that lake which burns with unquenchable fire? Will you not instantly throw yourself on the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, receiving and believing the promise of God in him? You defer at your peril. You put to hazard your soul and your eternal interests, of more value than worlds and the universe. May the Holy Spirit lead you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

DOES GOD DWELL IN YOUR HOUSE?

DO YOU READ HIS HOLY WORD MORNING AND EVENING, AND PRAY WITH YOUR FAMILY? God has made you the head of your house for the purpose of training up your family in his ways and for his service. Of Abraham he said, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord." Gen. xviii. 19. Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh. xxiv. 15. God constituted the family relation, "that he might have a godly seed." Mal. ii. 15. The everlasting happiness of your family depends on their being servants of God. You must be destitute of the best of feelings, if you do not desire the welfare for time and eternity of your wife, children, and servants. God says, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. vi. 4–9; and by Jeremiah, "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name." Jer. x. 25. Philip Henry used to say, "If the worship of God be not in the house, write, 'Lord have mercy on us,' upon the door, for there is a plague, a curse in it." His son Matthew said, "A family without prayer is a house without a roof, open to every storm, and exposed to the wrath and curse of God."

DO YOUR CHILDREN AND SERVANTS REGULARLY ATTEND UPON FAMILY WORSHIP? It is of the greatest importance to form a regular habit for them. To do so, you must be very particular in requiring their attendance. Neglecting this duty to your servants, by their influence and example they may undermine the principles you would cultivate in your children, and defeat all your exertions. Few persons properly estimate the influence of servants upon the children of a family: it will be felt by them until they die.

DO YOU MAKE CONSCIENCE OF SECRET PRAYER? It is a good plan, not only to pray for yourself, but for each member of your family by name, for whatever you think they need. Pray for the church you attend, its minister and members, and always that the Spirit of God may accompany the word preached with power to the hearts of sinners. Your love for, and practice of secret prayer, is one of the best tests of the honesty and sincerity of your religion. God does not forget secret prayer. Matt. vi. 6. You cannot wish ill to any man, if you sincerely pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Ministers of the gospel need your prayers. They want praying people. By prayer we bring God to our help. No money, however liberally given, can buy the gift of the Holy Ghost; but prayer enters heaven and draws down the gracious influences of that blessed Spirit. A poor praying member of a church is a greater blessing to it than the influence of many rich ones. Urge your children and servants to pray in secret for the influence of the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify their hearts. Endeavor to teach them the true nature of prayer, that it is not any form of words, but the offering up of the desires of the heart to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, for things which are agreeable to his will. Give each of them a Bible for their own use, and urge them to read a portion of it every day. Teach them about God—his true character, and their duties to him. Do not let any child or servant go out of your family without a Bible.

How do you and your family spend the Lord's day? It is the Lord's time. It is the hem of the week. Don't waste it. It is more precious than other days. Do you rise as early on it as on other days? Do you use diligence in improving its sacred hours? Let no unnecessary work be done. Leave none of your Saturday's work that may delay you in entering upon the sacred duties of this holy day. You cannot rob God of his day without loss.

Get all your family ready, and take them to the house of God in good season. Require all to go that are able. Don't let trivial excuses keep any away, and while there keep them under your own charge. Some secure themselves a seat in the house of God, but care not where their children or servants are. A parent or master's duty is as binding in the church as at home.

Teach your children to reverence and love God's house? It is the place where he has promised to meet and bless his people. We should love to be where God has said he will be, and should be anxious to appear before him. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, *there am I* in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. The Psalmist said, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord." "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Psa. xxvi. 8; xxvii. 4; xxxiv. 2, 4, 10.

Is the service of Christ your delight? Do you desire for yourself and children an interest in him, more than all earthly good? You labor to provide food and clothing for yourself and them: do you use as much diligence in seeking the Saviour and striving to lead them to him? All labor for your bodies will soon be over: what have you done, and what are you doing for your souls? O, what thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.

Should you neglect to provide food for your family until they died from starvation, you would rightly be judged guilty of their death. How much more guilty, and how much more terrible will be the judgment due to you, who, as a parent or master, have made no provision for the eternal welfare of the souls of your children and servants! In that great and dreadful day, when they shall stand before God, and charge their ruin upon you, what answer will you be able to give? Will you be able to call God to witness how you longed for their salvation; how diligently, and carefully, and regularly you trained them in the knowledge of the way to heaven? Will you be able to point to the days and nights when you plead with him for a blessing upon them? Will they bear witness for you, remembering the family altar, the prayers, and the example which you set before them? Will they say, "We were taught the knowledge of God, to reverence and keep holy the Sabbath-day; were prayed with, and prayed for, and entreated to seek and serve the Lord, and prepare for heaven?" Or will they, in that day, stand before God your judge, to upbraid you for your unfaithfulness and neglect of their souls?

If their souls are cast into hell, under the wrath and curse of God, how aggravated will be your anguish, to hear one and another charging you, their parents and masters, before an assembled universe, as being instrumental in their damnation? "Oh, if it had not been for you, this would not have been our place. You never prayed with us, nor for us. You never taught us to read God's word, or to keep his holy Sabbath. You never led us to the house of God, nor taught us that we must worship him. You did not pray with us nor for us, either in your family or in your closet. You never told us that we should prefer eternal things to the perishing things of time." Some may then say, "We saw you read the Bible at times, and go to the house of God, but you never urged it upon us. One single word from you as parents and masters, might have kept us out of the evil company into which we were led, and one word from you might have directed us to the Bible, and the Sabbath, and the house of God; but you never spoke to us one word about God and our souls. Now all these opportunities are over; now it is for ever too late. We are ruined, without hope. We chose our own wicked ways and our wicked companions, and you never restrained us. Now, warnings can do us no good. *We are lost;* LOST FOR EVER, without remedy. But our blood is upon *you.*—*A visit to your Family.*

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SERMON DXCVI.

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THE WORLD'S FAIR; OR, THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF THE INDUSTRY OF ALL NATIONS, IN 1851, IN LONDON.*

> "Blessed of the Lord be his land,
> For the precious things of Heaven,
> For the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,
> And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun,
> And for the precious things put forth by the months,
> And for the chief things of the ancient mountains,
> And for the precious things of the lasting hills,
> And for the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof,
> And for the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush."—Deut. xxxiii. 13—16.

I propose on this occasion, my brethren, to trace out and read to you some lessons from late events, especially from the great historical act of the year—*the Crystal Palace in London, as the exponent of the state of the world up to* 1851.

Suggestion is one of the most active principles of the human mind. It ministers greatly to the pleasures of existence, and gives to men of enlarged intelligence the means of various and extensive gratifications. I trust, therefore, that some thoughts on the great event of the year will not be found unappropriate or uninteresting, nor fail to call forth your gratitude to the Creator for his manifold blessings. Associations retrospective and prospective, commercial, national, romantic and religious, cluster around the Palace of Glass. The first of May last ushered in an event unparalleled in the history of the world, and long will it be remembered, and for centuries to come it will inspire the pen of the advocate of commerce, and of peace. The day has passed away like other days, but the consequences still live.

It was an appropriate time for the opening of the great scene. Every people, from the cold North to the glowing South, has regarded May-day with peculiar interest. It was a festival in olden, as it has been in modern times, and it was the fittest day to inaugurate the triumph of Art. The bright flowers, and the light breeze, and the sweet perfumes; the splendors of earth

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* Delivered in the Church on *Lafayette* Square, New Orleans, Nov. 27, 1851.

—complicated as is its mechanism, every part is adapted to ensure the utmost efficiency in its use; and so of the arm and bones of the shoulder, and the position of the hand in its relation to the body, legs and feet, and the obedience of the whole body to the mind, on the due exercise of which our elevation is instrumentally and entirely dependent. Inferior creatures possess astonishing powers of instinct. But that power is at once perfected. With them there have been no inventions, no discoveries, and consequently no Great Industrial Exhibition.

> "The winged inhabitants of Paradise
> Wove their first nests as curiously and well
> As the wood-minstrels of our evil day."

The comb of the bee, the dwelling of the beaver, and the web of the spider, were as perfect in the days of Noah and Methuselah as in the days of Washington. The dog and the elephant in the days of Nimrod as sagacious as they are now. But man's destiny is progression, through a career of indefinite advancement. The motto of humanity's coat of arms is "onward, onward." Man has a hand to write and a mind to direct it, and his mind is moved and developed by circumstances, and the result is art and manufacture. The history of the arts, therefore, is the history of mans's physical and intellectual progress. One art arises after another before our view, as the successive memorials of a triumphant course. No instinct, animal or superanimal, or even angelic, could have produced the Crystal Palace; it is the aggregate of many influences, rising in such developments as *educatable* mind, gradually increasing and unfolding powers of genius, only could produce. It was a victory of the highest order of intellectual effort over matter—the shrine of mind's loftiest aspirations. Expositions of art have taken place for the last fifty years in the French metropolis, and in the larger towns and cities of the Continent and of Great Britain. As early as 1723 an exhibition of National arts and manufactures was established in Ireland. The Industrial Exhibition in Hyde Park is not then like its own Crystal Palace, the design of one mind and the work of a few weeks. On the contrary, it was like those cairns which are memorial mounds that every passer-by helps to build. Art-unions and trade-sales, and fairs in the large cities of Europe awakened and prepared the public mind—sowed the seed and this is the harvest. The Great Industrial Exhibition is like the aloe, which, in the most favorable circumstances, requires the culture of half a century to bring it to perfection. Never, unless in Milton's Eden, and certainly not there, was there ever seen such a gathering into one place of earth's products, as in the Hyde Park Bazaar. It was a city-like mart, an immense assemblage of shops beneath one crystal roof; such as Bagdad, Cairo, Damascus, Constantinople—nay, the globe itself never contained before. Embosoming in its midst a pleasure garden with great trees, and fresh flowers, and gushing fountains; more like the work of an Eastern magician than of veritable human hands. The Glass Palace, covering 18 acres of ground, consists of a transept and nave. The transept is 408 feet long, surrounded by a semi-cylindrical vault of 72 feet in diameter. The nave is 1,848 feet long, 64 feet high, and 72 feet wide. The total area of the ground floor is 772,784 square feet, and that of the galleries, which extends nearly a mile in length, is 217,100 square feet. The cubic contents of the building are 33 millions of feet. Thirty miles of gutters for carrying off the water, 200 miles of sash bars, upwards of 4,000 tons of iron, 896,000 superficial feet of glass, weighing 400 tons, were used in its erection. But no general description in words and figures can convey a just idea of its external magnificence or of its internal splendor. "Within its precincts," says a late reviewer, "are displayed the productions of a planet; its diamonds and its gems; its gold and its metals; its coal and its minerals; the ancient and the recent productions of its soil; the rich spoils of its animal and vegetable life. Around them stand in proud array the noblest efforts of human genius; the lifeless portraiture of forms divine; the brilliant fabrics, and the wondrous mechanisms which science and art have combined their powers to create."* Here were the precious things of Heaven; the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon, and the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills. The gigantic edifice and its innumerable and ever-changing pictures which from above and from below met the eye of the hundreds of thousands that wandered in astonishment through its crystal labyrinths—the splendor of its decorations—the magnitude, number, and variety and value of its contents, altogether made it the most wonderful exhibition ever put forth by the human race. I remark:

II. The Great Industrial Exhibition will have a favorable influence on mankind in several ways.

1. This exposition of the industry of all nations exerts a most beneficial influence on the taste, knowledge, commerce, and physical welfare of mankind, by encouraging the useful and ornamental arts.

An insatiable love of gain characterizes all commercial ages, and the more so as the spirit of trade is successful in materializing itself. A commercial people may not bow down to images of carved wood, of gold and silver; and yet their god may be "the vice, the saw, and the hammer," their homage may be to things that are seen and temporal, which gratify the lust of the eye and the pride of life, and they that will be rich may fall into diverse temptations, which lead to many hurtful lusts, and drown men's souls in perdition. Still, true piety has "the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It teaches us to look favorably upon the progress of the arts, useful and ornamental, and to be thankful for talent in invention and cleverness in contrivance, and to remember our Creato[illegible]in all that improves, elevates, and adorns the condition of ma[illegible]n the present stage of his existence. The sight of so many p[illegible]oductions of art must have exercised the judgment, inspired the admiration, and chastened and guided the sensibilities of the mind as to artistic beauty, and enlarged the acquaintance of mankind with modern inventions, and furnished subjects for thought, reflection, and improvement, which will stimulate to new discoveries and combinations which shall yet fill up the history of human achievements.

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* North British Review. And here, once for all, the author wishes to say that he has availed himself of whatever suggestions he has found appropriate in the various publications about the World's Fair that have fallen into his hands.

> "As Spring's unfolded blooms
> Exhaling sweetness, that the skillful bee
> May taste at will from their selected spoils,
> To work her dulcet food;"

so the large collections of earth's choicest things exposed to the gaze and study of mankind cannot fail to be improved by them in their studios, and workshops, and mills. Here the sage and the artist of every clime, of every color, and of every faith, were engaged in studying the productions of each other's country, pondering over each other's labors, which they had essayed to do under the sun, and sharing each other's wisdom, and wiser grew on "the mission of the ages and the long result of time." For truly was this Palace of the arts a cosmopolitan gymnasium for the world, and a temple of Concord, in which a thousand hearts beat as one, and a thousand anthems issued from twice ten thousand tongues.

Lord Bacon's germinant idea has been realized. He thought it would be conducive to the advancement of human knowledge, if we had "a calendar resembling an inventory of the estate of man, of all inventions which are now extant, and out of which doth naturally result a note what things are yet impossible, or not yet invented." In the Palace of Glass we have the very thing—the huge household-book of the world's furniture, bound in glass. But it fails in one thing which Lord Bacon wanted. It does not show us what is impossible.

The advancement of the arts, industrial and luxurious, tends to the prosperity of mankind. The discoveries, which are the property of the wealthy only at first, descend slowly and imperfectly, but certainly, to the poorer classes of society, as the knowledge of the arts and inventions of mankind is more generally diffused, and applied to the comfort and elegancies of domestic life. It can no longer be with Christian nations, as it was with the most civilized nations of antiquity, that their masses should remain comparatively barbarous. The barriers of caste are broken down. The sum of the joys and sorrows of the million, are now the ocean that swells over the globe and gives it its character. Even those arts which seem remote from the poor man's fireside, effectually contribute to the perfection of manufactures, which either furnish him with employment, or adorn his rural habitation. The pursuits of immediate utility, in clearing the forest lands or in toiling at the mill, and of refined pleasure, however far separated from each other, under constitutional law and free trade, alike combine in exalting a nation's welfare. Mechanical skill, to use the words of Prince Albert, is now "wedded to high art." The multitudes of civilized nations have risen in education and social position, so that, what were luxuries some years ago, are now necessaries; and thus the demand upon industrial ingenuity has greatly increased. And the pressure of the utilitarian tendencies of the times makes inventive thought flow rapidly into facts. And the inventor, the manufacturer, the farmer, and the artisan, are consequently rising in social estimation. The men of glory do not now belong exclusively to the army and navy. Watt and Fulton and their successors share largely the thoughts and the praise of the world. In the days of Asaph, a man was famous according as he had "lifted up axes upon the thick trees." Those were good and honest days. To be a gentleman then, it was not necessary never to have touched an implement of labor. The Great Exhibition has done much to correct an erroneous and morbid standard, and restore us to the proper idea of the nobility of labor. Its works of art and utility, valued at two hundred and fifty millions of dollars, were not the product of white kid opera-goers, club-loungers, indolent, aristocratic, pleasure-loving consumers of earth's good things. They were the noble incarnation of the power of the stalwart, healthy hands of the WORKERS of our race, who are as superior to the mere purse-proud drones, as the finest Sevre's porcelain is to the unbaked clay. In the Crystal Palace was seen the connection between science and art. It was the practical application of philosophy that gave birth to the manifold kinds of machines, which have at once abridged the toils and improved the products of human skill. Science has given beauty and adaptation to almost all the works of art. Phidias, it is true, succeeded Aristotle, and Michael Angelo came before Lord Bacon; yet Science has ever proved herself the friend of those arts which minister immediately to the enjoyments of mankind. Nor can any sagacity anticipate, or fancy conceive, the yet future enlargement of human science, especially in its minute details, to be derived from the reflections of scholars, artistes, and philosophers, and especially of *farmers and mechanics*, who have been to the

World's Fair, and have seen, and will conquer, in their studios and shops, by making the busy activities of useful art yet more ministrative to man's enjoyments and progress. If, in the language of the old Spectator, "The arts have heretofore been the servants of commerce," now commerce must be the servant of the arts, and both the arts and commerce become more than ever the servants of humanity. If the first efforts of industry were chiefly animal, successive exertions have taught them to become scientific. Arts give birth to Science; and Science, in her turn, like a dutiful child, ministers to Art. Many of the great inventions of our race are the works of operative laborers. And as the Great Exhibition is the result of a desire to stimulate industrial progress, to elevate the position and to increase the perfection of the useful arts, so its influence will also tend to embody the genius of the fine arts in the products of industrial labor. "Souls cannot, like bodies, be embalmed to withstand the influence of time." Ages are like successive spring seasons, involving the perpetual uprising of new life and fresh beauty. The human spirit cannot be kept in the prison bounds of past ages. "One mighty to save" stands by every sepulchre in which man is entombed, and says, with authority—"Loose him and let him go." Events may retard human progress, but nothing can prevent it. Man does not yet know himself. He is capable of discoveries, inventions, and improvements, that are not yet dreamed of. The vast future is for him. There is no conqueror but God.

2. The World's Fair has enlarged the knowledge of mankind, by enlarging the knowledge of one nation of another. The great gathering has, undoubtedly, made Europe better acquainted with America, and America with Europe. The visitors to the Great Exhibition have enlarged their knowledge of each other, of human nature, and of the world. Narrow and contracted modes of thought incident to a very circumscribed abode, or limited knowledge of men and things, have been expanded into more generous dimensions. A deep and luminous insight into scenes of nature, works of art, and ways of men, was afforded, which none but the most stupid could wholly neglect to improve. The Exposition is calculated to promote and increase the free interchange of raw material and manufactured commodities between all the nations of the earth, and thereby to advance their industrial skill, taste, knowledge, and science. The producer—to use Mr. Babbage's classification—the consumer, and the middle-man were there brought together, and made to know each other, and to feel in some degree their kindred, and their mutual dependence. And being thus brought into contact with one another, they have doubtless become better acquainted with each other's good qualities, and their jealousies, animosities, and prejudices are greatly modified. As there are many good people in the

world that we do not love, simply because we do not know them, so there is much ingenuity, skill, and taste among other people and nations that we do not appreciate, because we are not acquainted with them. Every man is our brother, yet knowledge must precede our love for him. The first step to bring forth affection is acquaintance. The Congress of the Nations to show to each other their advance in the arts and sciences was one of the happiest methods that could have been devised for making them acquainted, and to make them feel that they "are one body, and members in particular." The triumph of the industrial arts will advance the cause of civilization more rapidly than its warmest advocates have ever dared to hope, and contribute to the permanent prosperity and strength of a country far more than the most splendid victories of successful war. "The influences thus engendered, the arts thus developed, will long continue to shed their beneficent effects over countries more extensive than those which the sceptre of England rules." It seems scarcely within the reach of the human mind to grasp the results accruing to mankind upon the triumph of the industrial arts over those of war. In this world-assemblage, nature, art, and utility were seen to struggle for the victory; and as utility is the basis of man's existence, at least in our age, the department of useful art seems to have triumphed in the contest. Even a London journal is so irreverent as to call the Koh-i-Noor "a large piece of carbon;" and another says, most ungallantly, that, "for the pleasure of sight, we would not change a drinking glass resembling a blue convolvulus for the Koh-i-Noor itself." The huge compendium of human civilization recently exhibited in London could not have been but in an age of peace, and could not have taken place without the means of transit which distinguish our day. Without railroads and their appliances, the use of iron and glass in buildings could not have been in such a state of progress, and without them the heavy masses of goods and wares, and the immense multitudes of the world's denizens that have been up to London, on a visit to the tutelary saints of the human race, could not have been transported, and thus collected together.

3. The World's fair is to be regarded *as a solemn contract of peace amongst the nations of the earth.* Its tendency is to establish universal international peace. It may be safely taken as a maxim, that such vast multitudes of the human race could not be brought together in peaceful rivalry, for one great common, peaceful purpose, and separate in peace, with mutual good will, if not with greatly increased mutual admiration, without its tending to some desirable end. There is a bond of consanguinity which encompasses all the descendants of Adam. And this gathering together of the nations has shown them that *God has indeed made of one blood all the families of men*, though of

many varying colors and faculties and tongues. There are sympathies in all human hearts, which are like the srtings of a concert of harps attuned in harmony, incontestibly proving their unity. For "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." When nations have measured strength with one another on the battle field, how deadly were the passions evoked,

> "Like warring winds, like flames from various points,
> That mate each other's fury, there is nought
> Of elemental strife, were fiends to guide it,
> Can mate the wrath of man."

But when men are marahaled under their banners, lifted up towards heaven as the incense clouds of accepted peace offerings; when these bloody symbols of war, that have floated over them on so many fields of slaughter, and rallied them to battle, death and glory, are the symbols of peace, "woven and lifted up by the hand of industry," hanging in unruffled unity—untorn by violence, unstained with blood—the emblems, indeed, of strife, but of that noble strife in which nations contend for victory in the fields of science, in the schemes of philanthropy, and in the arts of life—then the kindly instincts of the human breast, amid the glories of nature and the beauties of art, must have been unfolded, and mutual good will have brightened and blessed the interview. Then the better feelings of an inner and higher life are awakened, and man reflects the divinity of his original as a stream reflects the stars. "If in the material world the most repulsive elements may be permanently compressed within their sphere of mutual attraction—if the world of instinct, natures the most ferocious may be softened, and even tamed, when driven into a common retreat by their deadliest foe—may we not expect, in the world of reason and of faith, that men, served by national and personal enmities, who have been toiling under the same impulse, and acting for the same end, who are standing in the porch of the same hall of judgment, and panting for the same eternal home—may we not expect that such men, thus temporally united in heart and in purpose, will never again consent to banish the deadly cutlass or throw the hostile spear?" Their mutual acquaintance with each other, which the nations have gained by the interview of the World's Fair, must have a decided tendency to wear off their national asperities, and teach them to respect each other's rights. War after this will be more than ever fratricidal. Great Britain and America, who have met caah other in days gone by on so many well-contested, but bloody fields, have now been communing together many months in sweetest concord, and in the animated interchange of the courtesies and of refined life, they will most assuredly be more than ever unwilling to draw the sword against each other. And, as to the Continent, though the day *dawning is* exceedingly dark, still we will hope for the best. It was a custom among the Romans to split in two, and divide between themselves and foreign visiters who shared their hospitality, a small token called the *tessera hospitalis*, which was preserved from generation to generation in the two families who formed the friendly alliance. It became an heir-loom to remote descendants. So in the great gathering of the nations in the Industrial Mansion, the *tessera hospitalis* has been divide, and borne off to the East and to the West and to the North and to the South, over mountains and continents and oceans throughout the old and the new world, to be cherished through long years to come. Every article of art and of commerce bought or exchanged, and carried away from the Great Exhibition by the people of one nation from the stalls of another, connected as it is, and ever will be, with the associations of that Exhibition, becomes a Rahab scarf in the hands of the Knights of Jericho to prevent the destructions of war. The Exposition has made it apparent to all, that the different forms of industry mutually support each other ; and, therefore, in a commercial, social, and political aspect, its influence will produce wide-spread and long-enduring benefits.

It is a monument of the peacefulness of the age. It proclaims the supremacy of law, the exhaltation of that invisible and hallowed guardian of civil rights which sits upon the throne of the public mind. It indicates the improved condition of the people in education, intelligence, and taste, which is the result of agencies that have been doing their silent work through hundreds of past years, the chief of which is the Gospel of Christ. "These are the true victories, which cause no tears to flow," said his late Majesty, the King of the French, as he gazed on the trophies of French ingenuity and skill in the magnificent Palace de la Concorde, in 1839. And Napoleon said of a similar exposition in Paris, even while flushed with his early victories—"Our manufactures are the arsenals which will supply us with the weapons most fatal to the British power."

Finally.—Let us briefly consider a few of the lessons taught by the World's Pair. And—

First, The unspeakable advantages of international and domestic peace. Without the protection of law and the security of property and life, and the pursuits of agriculture, mechanics and commerce guaranteed by Treaties of Peace, no such exhibtions could ever have taken place, nor could its costly and pre. cious furniture have ever been made. While, therefore, the results of the exhibition must tend to the civilization of the human race, it is at the same time a most impressive lesson on the importance of cultivating the arts of peace, and the reciprocities of national brotherhood.

A *second* and higher lesson is, *The existence and beneficence of an Ineffable Creator, the Father* of mankind, whom all should adore and obey. We have seen that human art is but an imitation of the Creator's works. He reads to us from the flower, the cloud, the mountain, the skies and the ocean, lessons of the greatest importance. The universe is the handiwork of an All-wise and supremely benevolent God. The grand transparent Hall of Industry was not the result of a poet's dream, although Chuacer's poetic soul had "a dream which was not all a dream," of an island whose walls and gate were all of glass. It is, indeed, true, that every beautiful work of art was once a sort of dream—that is, it floated in the imagination before it was fixed and made visible by the hand. This picture or that splendid painting is Correggio or Ruben's dream transferred to canvas. The Apollo Belvidere—what is it but the sculptor's evening vision, carved in marble? Milton's "Paradise Lost" is a poet's high communings with the Invisible committed to paper. Glorious Karnak is an architect's thought some 3000 years ago, built up in stone and lotus-crowned colonnades. The Palace of glass is the thinking of an architect, consolidated most wonderfully into wood, iron and glass—rapid in its construction as the growth of the Victoria Regia—yet pervaded by unity of design and well compacted together. The parts were all prepared before they were brought together, like Solomon's Temple—great and complicated and varied machinery was employed—thousands of men were engaged in its erection, and the structure served as a scaffold for itself. And within its long aisles and galleries we have seen exhibited the productions of every art of every clime—works of strength and skill for necessity and convenience—for comfort and luxury—for ornament and display—things carved and moulded and woven—vast and minute, bold and elegant, simple and elaborate, running through all the conceivable departments and grades of inventive industry. Groups, heaps, masses and all manner of cunning work, covering nine miles of table room, yet classified and arranged according to the taste of the respective nations, from America to the distant "Ind." But this Repository of the peaceful spoils of all the earth is no fancy sketch—no mere poet's vision—no caprice of chance. It is the production of the human mind, whose constructive skill is singularly exhibited in the edifice itself—a clear-eyed intelligence that could survey, consider, contrive, adapt and fashion, and out of sand and ore and wood cause to rise up such a vast and magnificent pile—and then fill it with an almost infinite and diversified number of objects of art. If such a collection of earth's choice things could not be brought together without contrivance, much less could this universe of suns and stars and systems create and arrange itself in such wondrous harmony. If this incarnation of order and method prove the existence of human thought; much more does human thought and the world, and all that is in it, prove the being, power, wisdom and goodness of an Ineffable Creator, who is self-existent and eternal, "in whom we live, and move and have our being." And remembering how man in art imitates the Creator—how completely dependent he is for success on Divine Providence—how appropriate—looking up through the uncurtained transept of the Crystal Palace to the heavens, from the works of man to the Infinite and Eternal Worker, God—are the lines of Milton:

"These are thy glorious works. Parent of good!
Almighty! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable, who sitst above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works. Yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought and power divine."

A third lesson, and growing out of the preceding, is the *immortality of the human mind.* Among the numerous objects of art exhibited in London, were many that embodied man's "longing after immortality"—that spoke of his lifting himself up to a loftier sphere—that told of his wish to be surrounded with a halo more brilliant and enduring than can attach to material things. A deep, though dim consciousness of a higher existence prompted the artist to task his powers to conceive and execute what might approach to his idea of a brighter and higher bliss than earth affords. The spiritual is therefore seen struggling with the physical, and though often defeated, still struggling for the victory. And what is this but the essence of the soul asserting superior existence? This struggling through material forms, and rising out of them to communion with spiritual beings—this longing after immortality—this enriching of the soul with the spoils of time as its furniture for the great future, is nothing but the educating of the Divine offspring within us—the creation of God in his own image, and for the enjoyment of Himself where the spirits of just men are perfect. This glimpsing at things purer, nobler, and more enduring than the things of earth, is proof of man's higher and nobler nature. In the ambition of the artist to produce a work which his admirers vainly call immortal, we see a craving for some future existence. This is, however, a very limited view of the intellectual domain. The empire of the emotions, social affections, moral feelings, and religious capacities of the soul, are yet untouched. Nor is any account here taken of conscience, and of the capability of knowing, and loving, and serving the Creator; and yet even from this partial view of the subject, no slight conviction is derived of the immortality of the nature that possesses such attributes. It cannot be that there is no difference between the Crystal Palace and the minds that built and filled it. It cannot be that the artist expires when his workmanship ceases. It cannot be that a being, possessed of unbounded capacities for improvement, is destined to advance only a few steps in his proper career, and then be arrested in his course forever. It cannot be that a life of thought and feeling which contains the germs of higher thoughts and feelings, awaiting, as essential to their full development, other influences than those that are shed on earth, is to be succeeded by eternal unconsciousness and oblivion; and that a soul which finds in the present life a range too narrow for the full and vigorous scope of its nascent powers and feelings, is to be disappointed in its earnest longings and deep-seated hopes. The difficulties involved in such a supposition are even greater than the mysteries connected with immortality. To say that man perishes as the brute, is to charge the Creator with having begun a design, which he has thrown aside as useless—with having given a promise that is broken—as though the great Architect had constructed a portico to a magnificent temple, and then stopped short in his work, and breaking it down, scattered its beauty in the dust. It is true that absolute certainty of a future existence is attained only by believing the testimony of God, which is two-fold, internal consciousness, and his written Revelation. It is by the Gospel of the blessed God that life and immortality are brought to light; still, such a construction as the Palace of Glass, with its contents, is a palpable, world-wide acknowledgment of the superiority of mind over matter, and that superiority indicates a greater destiny hereafter. Through its multitudinous corridors, Immortality rises upon the age of reason, in the hazy distance, and in the Word of Eternal Truth, found within its precincts, Eternal life is carefully revealed.

If the vast material Universe bears witness to the existence and character of the Great First Cause—if the invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, and if the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork, how much more does the soul of man, with all its powers and capacities, its intellect and genius, and above all, its moral and religious susceptibilities, bear testimony to the being and attributes of the Creator! The whole universe is an illuminated volume of God's thoughts, written out for the benefit of his intelligent creatures. The great or beautiful that is in man's imagination, and the curious, elegant, and admirable work of his hands, fashioned according to the intellectual type within him, runs back to the infinite source of intelligence and to the ineffable origin of mind. Man has nothing—earth, though full of beauty and goodness, has nothing innate or self-created. All is derived from above. What then must that unrevealed fount of beauty and goodness be, of which all the choice thoughts and beautful imaginings of the best and greatest men from the *beginning* are but as drops to the ocean. What must that glory be, that eye hath not seen, nor human heart conceived of? I would mention as—

A fourth and last lesson, that seeing we are the creatures of an ineffable Creator who has formed us for happiness and immortality, we should as our first and highest duty fear Him and keep all His commandments. We should appreciate our blessings, social and political, and cultivate charity and gratitude. We are a spectacle. The principles of civil liberty, of religious freedom, and of a free government under well defined, clearly written constitutional laws, are entrusted to our keeping. Whatever may become of other nations in the coming struggle of Europe, Americans must be true to themselves and be equal to the occasion. No obscure part of the world's great drama is to be acted by us. Our banner is on the outer wall, and what we do must be done in the face of an eager world. We must be true to the great cloud of witnesses that encompass our path of duty.

The heroes and statesmen of our short but glorious past, by their wisdom, prudence, treasure and blood, have bequeathed to us the priceless patrimony of a healthful, vigorous, political constitution and free institutions. We must be true to coming ages—to the countless millions that are stretching their hands from the bosom of time and calling on us for help. And by being true to our fathers and to ourselves, and to the solemn interests entrusted to us, the Union shall be preserved inviolate—

> " 'Till wrapt in flames the realms of ether glow,
> And Heaven's last thunder shakes the world below."

Our origin and history, our constitution and laws, though in their infancy, our army and navy, our growth, expansion, increase in numbers, and our wealth, present points of interest, forms of grandeur, specimens of activity and developments of powers, which are an astonishment to the other and older cultivated portions of our race—themes which they are studying as great theorems in the science of civilization;—while our brethren of distant regions, in Africa and Asia, and the islands "afar off upon the sea," still savages or half barbarous, as they gaze on the signs of our glory, or listen to the tale of what we are and where we are and what we do, are filled with a vacant and bewildering kind of wonder. The position Providence has assigned to us is one we cannot shrink from. It would be treason to the principles and hopes we represent to falter or fail in our duty. We must be the model nation for the world, of self-governed, law-abiding, honest citizens. And in order to this, eternal vigilance must be given to the cause of popular education—knowledge, secular and religious, must be universally diffused—the Gospel of Christ be everywhere preached—the Bible have free course and be glorified in all the affairs and departme of life.

When Pythagoras demonstrated the geometrical propositi that in a rectangular triangle the sum of the two lateral squa is equal to the square of the hypoteneuse, it is written, that ordered a sacrifice of one hundred oxen. What offerings gratitude, my fellow-citizens, have we made for all the ma discoveries of modern times? What have been our thank-of ings for the printing-presses, the railways, the steam-ships, telegraphs, the steam printed books, the free institutions—g gifts of our God to us? By the progress of human arts, t increase of substantial comforts and of medical knowledge, t average of human existence has been lengthened many yea Have we been careful to give to the Author and Sustainer our being at least the one day in seven which he claims as own? He has favored us with the means of swift transit. A we extending the knowledge of Him,

"Far as the ocean waters roll,
Wide as the shores are spread?"

"Truth makes *our* children free at home,
Oh! that *our* flag unfurl'd
May shine, wher'er *our* children roam,
Truth's banner round the world."

It is the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush on Hor awful summit that has given us the precious things of Hea the precious fruits brought forth by the moon and sun, and chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious t of the lasting hills, the precious things of the earth and th ness thereof. To Him be all the praise, forever and ever.

SERMON DXCVII.

BY REV. WILLIAM CLIFT,

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FOLLY OF AMASSING WEALTH FOR CHILDREN.

> "Yea, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun; because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.
>
> "And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity."—ECCL. ii. 18, 19.

THE doubt, which Solomon expresses in the text, is thought to be solved, and the men of modern times, with almost unvarying uniformity, leave the result of their labors to their natural heirs, not doubting their competence to use it wisely. Where the wisdom of Solomon could only see an even balance of probabilities, they see a certainty, and instead of hating their labor from any apprehension that the man who shall come after them will abuse his inheritance, they delight in it, as the one thing needful for him. If they can but place him above want, and make him realize a life of luxurious ease, they attain their highest aspirations. Toil and danger are sweetened by the prospect of the brilliant career that awaits the heirs of their fortune. And this is the result to which nearly all classes, both in the church and out of it, come, notwithstanding that the adverse teachings of nearly three thousand years have been added to the wisdom of Solomon.

This experience fixes the rule with rare exceptions, that inherited wealth tends to make a man a fool, whatever may be his native endowments. And yet, every man who hoards money for another generation, is confident that his own children shall be an exception, and labors industriously to leave them a fortune. The great ends of life and the noble uses of wealth are lost sight of, that he may repeat an experiment, which Providence has suffered to be repeated in all ages, and which will continue to be repeated, until men see the folly of their cravings for the generation that is to come after them, and labor wisely to better the condition of their own.

In nine cases out of ten, at least, after a man has met his own reasonable wants, and those of his family, he hands over his surplus wealth to his natural heirs. Instead of using it himself as a talent entrusted to him by his Maker, he throws off this responsibility, and bequeaths it to his children, to be used by them, not knowing whether they shall be wise men or fools. We are at a loss to determine whether this is the result of design, deliberately cherished through life, or whether surprised at death's approach, men thus dispose of their property, when they can hold it no longer. As the most lenient view of human nature, we are inclined to believe that it is one of the many ways in which procrastination cheats us of present usefulness and happiness. The money that comes only by the hard toil of the hands or the head—that has been accumulated by the aching limbs and the throbbing brain, we are slow to part with. If it must go, we are anxious that it shall do the most good possible

—and as the offered almoners of our bounty come and go, we hesitate, thinking that the best opportunity for charitable investment is not yet. Sudden disease or old age surprises us amid these wary deliberations, and as the best disposition of a vexed question, we bequeath our hoarded gains to our heirs, hoping they will be wiser.

Whatever be the cause of this hoarding, it is, in almost every respect, an evil. Nothing so much stands in the way of the right use of wealth; so fosters avarice in the parent, and vice in the child; so mars personal happiness and usefulness; so palsies the energies of our churches—as this toiling to save money for another generation. Both the Revelation and the Providence of God are at war with the practice.

Solomon is very clearly committed against it; for he had no pleasure in all his labors, for the thought that he should leave his wealth to the man who should come after him, not knowing whether he would be a wise man or a fool. His apprehensions in this respect were not groundless, for history teaches us that Rehoboam was one of the weakest and most foolish of Jewish kings. To this result, doubtless, his inherited wealth very largely contributed. With a fortune and a kingdom ready to his hands, with no great public work, like the temple, to enlist his energies, and puffed up with ancestral pride, what marvel that his folly and insolence lost him the ten tribes? The experiment of making fortunes for children from that day to this has rarely been attended with better success. Must there not be something radically wrong in a practice resulting, so generally, in disaster and ruin?

The text suggests the

FOLLY OF ACCUMULATING FORTUNES FOR CHILDREN.

And here I would premise that the *bare fact* of leaving property to children or other heirs is not declared an evil. Whether it be such or not will depend on circumstances. If a child were insane, idiotic, or in any way disabled, it would be palpably wrong in a parent, having the means to make no provision for his wants. Doubtless, it is also right and proper to furnish a child with the means of prosecuting some business for a livelihood. A certain amount of capital is as necessary in most kinds of business, as tools are for the mechanic. The expediency, or the moral right even, of leaving children more than this, is questionable. At any rate, to leave them so much as shall put them beyond the necessity of self-exertion—"a fortune," as it is called—is wrong. It is an evil to children, to parents, to society.

I. It takes from children the *expectation and the purpose to succeed in life by their own efforts.* This is the general tendency of expectations of fortune. It is admitted that there are those who, either blessed with rare mental endowments, or a happy moral training, resist this tendency, and rise superior to the corrupting influences with which they are surrounded. But the exceeding rareness of such cases only sets the real tendency of expectations of wealth in a stronger light. The heir of fortune will naturally make his anticipated wealth the hope and reliance of his life. And difficult will it be to induce him to devote his attention and his energies to any useful occupation. The spur of *necessity* will be wanting. If under parental guidance he be put to some mechanical employment, to trade, or to study, his feelings will seldom be enlisted in his occupation. He is assured that *his fortune is made*, and whether industrious or not, he is secure of the comforts and luxuries of life. What matters it to him, whether he masters the science of his business or not? He does not expect to live by it. In academic life, his studies are a painful drudgery. His greatest mental efforts consist in framing cunning devices, to cheat his teachers of respectable recitations. If parental pride covet professional reputation for the heir, and he be sent to the appropriate schools of training, he avails himself of the larger licence accorded to his riper years in these institutions. He is more reckless of study, because he can be so without censure. He attends the ordinary routine of lectures, and possibly receives the customary diploma out of deference to his social standing, and is published to the world, on the catalogue, as a graduated master of divinity, medicine, or law. If he attempt professional practice, as he may, to save himself from the mortification of failure, he finds it altogether a different matter from professional study. The public have not the same pecuniary interest in submitting to a sham, that teachers and lecturers have. An enlightened community will not be likely to entrust its morals, health, or property, to the guardianship of men who have no proper qualifications for their professions. Wealth cannot command success in these callings. The heir usually makes but a professional blank, and feigned bronchitis, or some other friendly disease, early comes in to relieve him from duties, for which he has neither affection nor qualifications. He retires to elegant leisure, and ceases to be known except as the courted heir of fortune, the prodigal spendthrift, the bankrupt, or the drunkard. This is the ordinary history of the sons of affluence.

And the philosophy of such facts is almost as obvious as the facts themselves. Those strong incentives to exertion, which Providence designed should act upon every youth and help mould his character, are wanting. There has been a rude interference with God's plan of making virtuous and manly characters, and what wonder if the result be failure and disappointment? Full-grown men—men who leave their mark upon the community and the age in which they live—are only moulded under the expectation and the firm purpose to succeed in life by their own efforts.

II. The practice under consideration deprives children of the *education and discipline of self-reliance*. In regard to the great objects of life, they have neither faith nor works; they not only do not expect to succeed by their own efforts, but they are deficient in that practical training which commands success. The purpose of the parents to make them independent of labor, vitiates all their efforts at practical training, just as the expectations of the children vitiate their efforts at self-improvement. In either case, the thing aimed at it is but half done. Parents may take the most correct views of the education and discipline their children need, and yet fail of attaining the ends they know to be so desirable. They may have correct theories about the vanity of wealth, and the reverses of fortune, and see that some other reliance is indispensable. They may dream of letters or trade for their sons, or of domestic service, good housewifery, teaching, or artistic skill for their daughters. Yet the time and patience to make them truly accomplished in any of these callings, will always be wanting. Much may be attempted in the way of mastering the vulgar minutiæ of the occupations by which people get their bread, but little will actually be *done*. There will be a smattering of almost everything—a mastery of nothing. Great excellence in any of those callings by which men live, is not to be looked for among the heirs of fortune. The thought is ever present to the minds of the parents that their children will not need these callings; and as a man thinketh, so is he in his parental training, as in every thing else. His expectations for his children will give character to the influence he exerts upon them. Men are not wont to make much provision for mere contingencies. Daughters, expected to shine in the parlor, will hardly become well versed in the mysteries of house-keeping, upon the remote possibility that these may hereafter be available. Sons that are only expected to spend fortunes, will rarely know much of the drudgery of business, or of that close application to it which ensures success. There is no substitute for necessity in the training of youth, and God never designed there should be. Nothing but the stern fact that a man *must* work in some reputable calling, will make him prepare to work. Put this before the mind of an intelligent youth, and it will operate like a charm which genius can never supply. It will give him a firmness of nerve, and a skill in execution, that will distance all amateur rivals.

III. The folly we are discussing educates children in the radical error, that they are not to *do service* in the world, but are *to be served*. This is the tendency of their expectations, and do what you may to remove it, the impression remains still. This error is radical wherever it exists, and will vitiate any character, however interesting or amiable by nature. It is at war with all the arrangements of God's providence, quite as much as with the provisions of his grace. In the natural world, every thing ministers to the welfare of the whole, from the meanest insect, to the largest animal—from the smallest atom, to the mightiest globe. To make children an exception to this universal law is not only to separate them from their kind, but to sever the ties which bind them to all of God's works. That bond of sympathy with their fellows, and with the external world, which is essential to the development of their characters, is broken. You can no more grow a plant without light and heat, than you can rear a symmetrical character without sympathy with humanity, and with nature. Let a child come up to maturity with the idea that he is to do no service, and fill no sphere of usefulness, and call him by what pleasing name you will, he is a monster of selfishness. In his view, all things exist for his service. A view that runs so athwart the arrangements of Providence, must necessarily render him miserable. God has made us to find our happiness, not in passive pleasures, but in ministering to others. Hence the highest luxury of the soul consists in deeds of self-forgetting benevolence. Kind words, kind acts to make others happy, kindle in our own hearts a glow of satisfaction which the selfish soul never knows. What wretchedness then, awaits the petted and effeminate nursling of affluence! Neither man nor nature will do his bidding, and minister at all times to his selfishness. But,

IV. Hoarding property for heirs brings evil to *parents*, as well as to children.

Scarce anything beside fastens upon them so strongly the chains of avarice. The man who determines to be the executor of his own estate, finds a safeguard against the encroachments of this vice of old age. However prosperious he may be, he will always be disbursing and contriving to dispose of his accumulations. The large outlays, demanded by the support and education of a family, will naturally seek other channels when these ends are accomplished, and children are doing business for themselves. But where a father determines to make not only his own fortune, but the fortunes of his children also, there is nothing to withstand the sway of avarice. Were he planning only for his own wants, his present experience might furnish him with some definite limits to his accumulations. But where he is toiling to provide for others, he has no such standard. His ambition for his children's future display, naturally grows with his accumulations. If he has the means of supporting them all in his own style of living he covets for them something a little better. Marriage is among the contingencies that may introduce them into different, perhaps higher circles, where social standing can only be maintained by greater display, and increased expense. Avarice finds a congenial soil in a heart filled with such asperations and plans for another generation. It steals upon its victim, under circumstances so plausible, as to prevent all alarm. It has the sanction of social usage—for where is the man that does not leave his estate to his children? It comes, too, under the guise of our strongest instincts, and confidently claims piety for its counsellor. He flatters himself, that it is but parental affection "providing for its own." Thus the deluded father hoards his accumulating treasures, blind to everything, but the pecuniary fortunes of his children.

The practice we are considering, not unfrequently mars the peace and happiness of the old age of affluence. In their eagerness for wealth, parents are prone to overlook other and more important provisions for their declining years; for large estates and ample means of enjoyment do not satisfy the cravings of the soul. Wealth will disappoint its votaries, just as they rely upon it. Passions inflamed by the long indulgence of a life of ease, are not the most comfortable companions to soothe the weariness and peevishness of age. But if wealth has not corrupted their own hearts, it may have practised its deceptions upon the minds of their offspring. The prospects of fortune, for which they have educated their children, have not necessarily imbued their hearts with filial tenderness and respect. The selfishness that has been so carefully nursed in youth, is not likely, at maturity, to prove a ministering angel to the decrepitude and helplessness of age. Gratitude for estates in anticipation is not among the most common virtues of mankind. But if the rich escape personal perils, and so far make investments in the characters of their children, that they prove kind and affectionate, still they have no safeguard against unworthy alliances in life. Society has always been infested with fortune-hunters, and always will be, so long as pecuniary fortunes are to be won by marriage; and of all the curses that track the pathway of the rich, these unquestionably are among the greatest. The true fortune-hunter has the keen scent of the blood-hound, and gold is the life-blood he pants for. He has the subtilty of the serpent as well as his venom. He is well versed in the study of human nature, and can assume any character he pleases, to worm his way into the sympathies and homes of the rich. Without character himself, he can put on that of another man as easily as his garment. He can flatter delicately or grossly, according to the taste of his victim. He can suit his every whim and humour with the utmost exactness, until his purpose is accomplished. And the heart most interested in his addresses has no alchemy by which she can detect his hypocrisy, no standard by which she can measure the baseness and villany for which she has given her affections. Little does the fond father know for what accomplished scoundrel he is laying up his treasures. The destiny of the possessions of the rich is one of the most instructive pages of history. Would it were often read and pondered by those most interested in its lessons. How often is the princely marriage portion of a daughter squandered in the life-time of her father, by a dissipated and spendthrift husband! How often does the grave kindly hide him from alliances more bitter than death! The rich cannot shape the destiny of the treasures they leave to their loved ones. They are more likely to prove a curse than a blessing to their heirs, and to spread for their own old age a couch of thorns.

V. *Society* suffers from this evil, as in consequence of it, it is deprived, in a great measure, of the active services of the children of the rich. These have as good capacities as others, and generally much better opportunities for their improvement. They might fill stations of usefulness as well as others; and with the capital they have for business and benevolent enterprize, they might accomplish far more good. But what has the heir for fortune to do with business? He loathes it. His fortune is made. And what cares he for usefulness? The world was made for his use, and he acknowledges no reciprocity of service. If the anticipated estate work its legitimate result upon his mind, his services are lost to society, and he comes nearer "creation's blank," than any thing in the universe beside.

And not only are they lost to society, but they usually corrupt a large class of their associates. Youth who have no expectations of wealth by inheritance, easily imbibe the hearty contempt of labour, the pride, the swaggering air, and the vices of the sons of the rich. Their fortunes are not indeed made, but they expect to make them by other devices than industry. Some turn flatterers and parasites. Others set up as specimens of genius, and maintain a precarious existense by their wits. Whilst others still turn fortune-hunters, and with successful hypocrisy, revel in the wealth designed for another's support. Thus is a large amount of talent and usefulness destroyed by this evil.

VI. This evil prevents united effort among the rich *for the industrial welfare of the community in which they live.* The man who makes family aggrandizement the object of the highest ambition, has no thought to bestow on matters of public interest. He does not wish to be encumbered with any of those enterprises which helps his neighbour as well as himself. Possibly he might miss the main chance, and his sympathies be drawn from the ruling purpose of life. It is a matter of indifference to him, whether his capital be invested at the poles or the tropics, if it only yield him the largest profits. But the man who suspects the wisdom of making the fortune of the generation that comes after him, will at least have the time and the opportunity to do something for the fortunes of his own generation. He will make sure of the happiness, which comes from the encouragement of home industry. As he is to be the executor of his own estate, he will see to it that his capital makes the community in which he lives more wise and happy, more thriving and prosperous.

IN CONCLUSION.

1. Perhaps it may be asked, shall we then disinherit our children? By no means. But be it our aim to leave them an inheritance better than silver and gold. There are treasures of heart and intellect which the moth cannot corrupt nor the thief steal. Be it ours to give them a character more priceless than jewels—a character that shall command any object worthy of human effort. If we desire for them riches, it were a more intelligent way of realizing our wishes to give them characters which will enable them to make their own fortunes than to bequeath them large estates. Does not the history of such bequests prove their folly? Has not disaster accompanied them from Solomon's day, down? Does not every community furnish its examples of men, who have made shipwreck of fortune and and character mainly because of their inheritance? What miracle shall God work to save our children from like ruin, if we repeat their folly? Why should they not be left to the pressure of those necessities which are common to the race, and have the privilege, which we have enjoyed, of making their own estates? Are not their capacities as good as ours, and is it not the same kind Providence over them, which has smiled upon us? Why attempt then to forestal Providence, and do a work for our children which God designs they should do for themselves?

2. The subject is an interpreter of God's providence sometimes shown to good men. It seems a strange thing with our worldly views of property, that good men should be stripped of their earthly possessions, just at the time when they seemed to be most needed for the education of their children. Is not this ordered, because the struggles of poverty are what their children most need, to give them habits of self-reliance, and to make them most useful in the world? God is more merciful to their children than they would have had courage to be. He has taken away earthly pleasures, that they might have an inheritance in character, infinitely more valuable to themselves and to the world.

3. The subject lays bare the great difficulty in the way of prosecuting the benevolent enterprizes of the church. The Christians of this age are not so much making money for Jesus Christ, as for their children. And instead of using their property as a talent for the good of their own generation, they are handing it over to be improved or abused by that which is to succeed them. Does not God hold every man responsible for the use of his own talents? Men seem greatly to fear that God's providence will die with themselves, and no one care for their children. Their highest anxiety for them after their own departure appears to be, "what shall they eat, what shall they drink, and wherewithal shall they be clothed?" Were it not better to leave these questions touching children, for children to solve; not doubting that he who has supplied our wants by the ministration of our own hands will, in like manner, supply theirs.

Very able treatises have been written showing the need of systematic contribution of our charities, and hinting that this is the great want of the churches. We apprehend that the difficulty lies deeper, and that so long as Christians are making money for posterity, they will have comparatively little to give to Christ, whether they give by system or impulse. The great prize tract of the age should be one that shall thoroughly make manifest the folly of this usage, and cause the accumulations of Christians to flow in other channels. The corner-stone in the temple of avarice, being thus torn from its base, the superstructure will inevitably fall, and the thousands and the millions that are now hoarded for the future ruin of the children of the church, will then go to bless a dying world—and the children will go with them. In consecrating property to God, our children will receive a new consecration, and the church and the world will be blessed.

Fellow-disciple, have you made this consecration? For what ends are you accumulating property? Is it for family aggrandizement, or for the glory of Christ's kingdom? Take heed how you make the former your object in life, lest to you shall apply, with peculiar force, the language of Christ, "He that findeth his life, shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it."

SELF-DENIAL.

Self-denial is not, as many seem practically to regard it, an obsolete virtue; important in its day, but the day for it is gone by. It is the great error of the times, to abate from the wholesome strictness of the Gospel. The tendency is to an easy style of religion; to smooth and widen the road to heaven—to consign over all the conflicts and endurances of piety, to men of a former period—of a rude and bloody day. This tendency cannot be too decisively checked, so seductive and fatal its working; so utterly false the grounds of it. Within, are hearts of treachery and sin; without, a world where God is not acknowledged, full of hostile agents and ensnaring temptations, prowled all over by the great enemy, the arch-deceiver, the devourer of souls by millions—almost by whole generations: in such a region, with such hearts, let the Christian expect the conflict, and be ready when it comes, and never shun the cross, but admit the necessity, and enter heaven by the true door—the authentic way.

The disciple will find it necessary to resort often to very prompt action, in the use of the potent phrase—Get behind me, Satan. That quaint and racy old divine, Thomas Fuller, tells us, that, "finding a bad thought in his heart, he disputed in himself the cause thereof, whether it proceeded from the devil or his own corruption—examining it by those signs, divines in this case recommended—such as, whether the thought was at full age, at the first instant—or infant-like grew greater by degrees. But he soon concluded that this inquiry had more of curiosity than religion; resolving that afterward he would not derive the pedigree, but make the mitimus of such malefactors." We defraud ourselves by not acting in these great matters decisively, as well as rigorously. We put in jeopardy the soul, by ever putting off the vigilance and the discipline, and the crucifying of the flesh to which our Lord is summoning us. We save the soul, by denying ourselves, and taking up our cross, and following the Divine Master. —*Rev. George Shepard, D.D.*

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SERMON DXCVIII.

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CHRIST THE MODEL OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.*

"He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."—MATT.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN:—To men like ourselves, engaged in the awful work of religious instruction—publishing and enforcing the lessons of Christianity—it cannot be uninteresting to consider the character of the Great Master by whom they were first expounded. He was himself a teacher, and the guide and model of all Christian teachers.

In a presence so venerable for learning, wisdom, and piety, it is with unaffected diffidence that I approach a subject of so much difficulty and importance. I do not, however, aspire to teach this reverend body. My humble ambition will be content to utter a few obvious thoughts; but though of easy discovery, it is not the less necessary that we give to them frequent and earnest consideration.

As we are the ministers of one who was himself a public instructor, we are bound to consider, *what* he taught, and *how* he taught. "For they (says Jeremy Taylor) who be doctors and teachers of others, must in their accesses and degrees of discipline, learn of him, who is over us in the mysteries of religion."

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The sacred office involves relations the most solemn. It is to mankind the vehicle of communications which affect, in the most decisive manner, interests as vast as the soul, and as imperishable as its immortality. In an office of so much responsibility, the need of divine guidance is most urgent. This guidance we have in Him, who gives us a "good example," both in the matter and manner of Gospel instruction.

In the particular consideration of the subject proposed, the Ministry of our Lord, let us examine—

I. His *doctrine;* and

II. His *manner* as a public teacher.

I. His Doctrine.

In every system of instruction, philosophical and religious, there are certain elementary principles, on which, as a basis, are founded all its statements, and from which flow all its conclusions. These doctrines are a law to the whole system, determining both its form and its exposition. What are these interior principles, it becomes necessary first to understand, in order to an intelligent and just apprehension of the scheme of which they are the logical elements.

What, then, let us inquire, were the doctrinal elements of our Saviour's Ministry? Now, the doctrines of our Lord, without having any formal and connected statement, will nevertheless be found to be perfectly clear and distinct, and of a nature well calculated to impart a majesty and authority to his teachings above that of the Scribes.

The doctrinal principles of the Great Teacher are few, simple, grave, and deeply ethical; and from these he never departs. Whatever the circumstances of his work, whatever his immediate design, his principles are ever the same. Whether arguing with the doctors, discussing propositions with the Pharisees, or discoursing to the common people, his teaching revolves in the same system of truths, in the illustration and enforcement of the same great principles. Jesus never wandered amid visions; he was never betrayed into the regions of the imagination; he had no taste for unsatisfying speculations, but is content with the statement of a few simple and important propositions.

In presenting a few of the great principles by which our Saviour's ministry was characterised, we will consider them,

1. Under his doctrine of God.

2. His doctrine of Man.

1. *Doctrine of God.*

The doctrines of our Saviour were not philosophical in the sense of being deductions from nature, from the laws of man or of society, but they are theological in that they not only treat of God, but are derived *immediately* from God.

It cannot fail to strike the discerning mind, that in our Saviour's ministry, the prominent idea exhibited—the great idea—

the ever-present idea—is God. The Supreme God—spiritual, holy, and almighty—is the grand subject of its disclosures. In this respect his ministry was singular and extraordinary. Among his own people, the Scribes repeated the traditions of the Elders, and the speculations of the Rabbins. In the schools of Gentile learning, philosophy was the subject. But Jesus took neither Jewish masters nor Greek sages for his guide. He did not teach philosophy, but *theology*. God, the Great Father and Supreme Governor of all, is the fundamental element of his teaching. All his doctrines are but the beaming radii of a system of which God is the grand and radiant centre. From this source flows all that light, which clothes his statements and conclusions with irresistible power and conviction.

He nowhere attempts to prove his doctrine of God; he takes it for granted—assumes that it is a self-evident proposition, written on the hearts of men. From this doctrine he deduces the natural obligation to obey and love God, with all the heart and all the strength. And basing this law on the convictions of the human conscience, nothing can be more dignified, authorative, and convincing, than his enforcement of its great duty. The simple yet sublime explications of Jesus concerning this subject, have a conclusiveness to which the profound demonstration of Clark, and the grand and eloquent illustrations of Charnock, add nothing.

The Supremacy of God is not an empty term to meet a logical requisition in a doctrinal scheme, and while perhaps stated in form, stripped in reality, by presumptuous limitations, of its true glory. Jesus exhibits the Eternal Father as the rightful Governor and actual disposer of the world: comprehending in his counsel all events, the fall of the little sparrow, and the numbering the hairs of our heads, as well as the fall of empires and the destiny of angels; and as the Supreme and just Governor, ordering his elections according to his own pleasure, whether in respect to the temporal or eternal interests of men. It was on this subject Jesus said, "Lord of Heaven and Earth, thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." And when men would presume to question the wisdom and justice of his sovereign appointments, he tells them by an impressive parable, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the first shall be last, and the last first, for many are called but few chosen."

God the Supreme, in the august depths of his own eternal wisdom and goodness, fixes every event, and settles the destiny of every creature. To this great fact the Saviour appeals—at one time as a rebuke to pride and presumption, and at another, as an encouragement to patience, confidence, and resignation. How impressive and beautiful that illustration of Providence which is given to the disciples in the Sermon on the Mount—"Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not neither do they reap; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field; they toil not, neither do they spin. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

But why should we particularize? The Great Master never speaks without reference to God. All his divine teachings are the emanations of this central light. All his moral inculcations are inspired by this sublime type in his own mind. The agency of an Almighty God, supreme and universal in nature and grace, is the great truth which he never suffers to escape the minds of his hearers. Such was the doctrine of Jesus respecting God. Can anything be more impressive or sublime? More full of just, awful, and comprehensive views of the character and government of the Most High?

But as further illustrating the Ministry of Christ, let us consider,

2. *His Doctrine of Man.*

(1.) *Responsibility.* Man is recognised as a moral being, sustaining relations to God and man, and as acting freely in these relations. Jesus conforms his teachings on human responsibility, to the experience and convictions of men. He does not pause to reason on the subject, to adjust the necessity of pre-determination to the liberty of the agent. What do we see? We behold him who insists upon the absolute sovereignty of God—ascending the while to the awful heights of predestination, coming down without faltering—without the slightest nervous disturbance, to insist with equal decision and authority on the most absolute human responsibility. Did Jesus find the harmony of these extremes? Did his all-discerning mind perceive no inconsistency in statements which arrogant philosophy has dared to denominate absurd and contradictory? If to Him, who knew all things there be nothing irreconcilable in the sovereignty of God with the responsibility of man, then may they be admitted as harmonious facts, though the weakness of human reason may be at fault in demonstrating the relations of this harmony.

The Great Master insists on the responsibility of all men, every where. He incorporates it in all its discourses, and bears it aloft as the grand argument by which to enforce the multifarious lessons of human duty. Throughout that wonderful Sermon on the Mount, this principle runs as a moral ligament to bind its mighty ethics on the consciences and hearts of men.

No matter how profound and entire the deep of human corruption, and how certainly and wholly evil flows the stream of human action from such a source, our Saviour abates nothing of human responsibility on that account. In the natural obligations of man, and in the nature of voluntary moral action, he lays his principle of accountability as just as the unchangeable righteousness of the divine government. Sanctioned by the convictions of human consciousness, the heart responds to the truthful and terrible statement. Recoil from it—dread it as we may—the enlightened conscience must yet admit its truth.

Jesus employs this weighty principle in all his labors to instruct and reform men. I do not say that we may not reason with men on the abstract beauty and usefulness of virtue, and the abstract hatefulness and hurtfulness of sin. But to reason against the tide of depraved appetite. and for the claims of an absent and unappreciated virtue, will be more interesting to the moralist than profitable to the sinner. Jesus shows us a more excellent way. He appeals to the great principle of responsibility, and enforces duty thereby.

In illustration of this principle, how striking are many of the parables! how impressive that of the talents, and that of the stewardship! As we read the solemn language of representation, a deeper sense of responsibility is awakened within us. We feel it is no trifling thing to live in a world where every action and every thought has its relation to a coming judgment. Under the simple teachings of Jesus, we feel our intimate relation to God our Judge. Eternity seems to overshadow time; and intermingling its own vast realities with the actions of the present life, it imparts a deeper solemnity to all, because binding the conscience to accountability in all.

Thus did Jesus exhibit the principle of responsibility. His teachings, pervaded by so mighty a matter, might well occasion the people to say of him, "Never man spake as this man."

The teachings of our Lord respecting man, embrace another important principle. It is,

(2.) *Man's corrupt and sinful state.* On the basis of this melancholy fact, that man is fallen, Jesus began his public ministry. With that consummate wisdom which distinguished every thing he did, he reognizes the great evil at once, and begins by laying the axe at the root of the tree. John was a reformer, but Jesus a regenerator. The cleansing of the outside of the cup and platter was not enough in those eyes which discerned the heart to be full of all corruption.

John presents, in a comparative light, the true nature of our Saviour's ministry. "I am come (he says) baptizing with water; but he that cometh after me *baptizeth with the Holy Ghost*" Such was the extraordinary ministry of our Lord. In a work so radical, we discover the utter ruin of the human soul.

In the treatment of Nicodemus, we have an explicit testimony to man's real condition. The fact, with the teachings to which it gave rise, admits of the one construction only, that man is wholly ruined. That one so excellent, so candid, so inquiring, and so accomplished in all the visible decencies of religion as this "master in Israel," still needed the new birth, is a fact that leaves us in little doubt of the great want of mankind. And then the declaration which accompanies the fact, is as conclusive as words can make it, that " that which is born of flesh is flesh "—is corrupt, depraved, sinful.

Jesus enters into no formal statement of his doctrine; it was not his manner, for he did not follow the logicians. But in all his dealings with men he assumes that they are fallen and sinful. It was his habitual effort to lead them to the knowledge of themselves that they might discover the depravity of their hearts. From outward fairness and pharisaic morality, he turns their eyes inward upon the perversity and wickedness of the heart In the Sermon on the Mount, the virtues which are inculcated, and the tempers insisted on, shew precisely what and how great, in his estimation, is the disordered state of the human soul. Every grace there demanded, exposes an opposite gracelessness; and every beatitude pronounced, reveals the deep curse of man's real condition.

Not only are men hopelessly depraved, but their state is as helpless as hopeless. They have rebelled, and so wasted all original virtue by sin, and are so utterly lost, that return to God is impossible. " How can those that are evil speak good things ?" inquires the Saviour.

It is in view of this helpless state of man that the Spirit is promised, by whose agency alone the depraved are to be renewed, and the lost reclaimed. Men are taught their absolute dependence. The pride of self-reliance, and the arrogance of human ability, is rebuked and humbled by the declaration, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Even an apostle is assured that all his resolution and decision of purpose are insufficient alone, to preserve him from a great sin. Such is human infirmity, in our Saviour's account. Where is the recuperative principle in man, that last element of goodness which has survived the fall, and like Hope in the box of Pandora mitigates the severity of its evil ? We find it not in the teaching of Jesus, because Jesus, who knew what was in man, found no such relic of a purer state in his present ruin.

Jesus contemplates human nature as a ruin, noble and immortal indeed, but utter and hopeless. Over the dark miseries of this noble ruin he wept on Mount Olivet; to effect the work of its restoration, he bled on Mount Calvary.

It was the picture of hopeless, universal depravity which Jesus spread out before the minds of the people, which at once commanded their admiration, and excited their hatred. It was by the faithful exhibition of this great truth to men, that they were moved to desire and plot his ruin. It was on this account, Jesus tells the Jews, " ye seek to kill me." And again he says, " the world hateth me, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil."

Such, then, were some of the great principles of our Saviour's doctrine. They were grave in themselves, and deeply affecting mankind. They were principles touching the character of God and the condition of man, which no Rabbi had ever uttered from the law—which no Gentile sage ever taught from the heights of Philosophy—which had never been heard in Attic grove or Jewish Synagogue. Shall we wonder at the power of Him who taught such wonderful doctrine? It was in the exposition of principles so new and so sublime, so perfectly simple, and yet so deeply practical and momentous, that Jesus taught with an unexampled authority and power, "and not as the Scribes."

But if the *doctrine* of our Lord was of a nature to command and impress, we shall find that—

II. *His* MANNER *was in perfect harmony with the* MATTER *of his instructions.*

1. The leading characteristic of our Saviour's manner as a public teacher was *earnestness.* There is a histrionic earnestness which the deep player assumes as an artistic propriety demanded by his subject. There is an artificial earnestness, an *ad captandum* zeal to meet popular expectations, and awaken its applause, and there is a structural earnestness, a susceptibility to certain combinations of thought and forms of imagery and expressions, like the chords of the harp, strung to certain impulses of the air. But the earnestness of the Great Master was neither professional nor emotional. The weighty matters which he taught were the utterances of the deepest convictions. The doctrine of his ministry, in all its relations and momentousness had a vital existence in his understanding, and in his heart. He could say, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." That which JESUS proclaimed he felt in his deepest reason. The doctrine which he taught authenticated itself in the vivid sentiment and realizations of his mind. In a word, from the earnestness of his soul his mouth spake.

The message of the Gospel is certainly a communication grave and important in the last degree. The just appreciation of its nature will be followed by earnestness in its announcement. Christ had this earnestness, because he had the full measure of such appreciation.

2. The earnestness of Christ was evinced in the *simplicity of his teachings.* True earnestness, flowing from deep conviction is, perhaps, always simple. Great thoughts, like costly stones, and precious diamonds, appear best in the simplest settings. The soul inspired by a vast truth, or laboring to disclose a great conviction, rejects the useless ornaments of rhetoric, and selects the plainest form of illustration. The manner of Jesus was perspicuous simplicity; an inartificial transparency of language is the chosen expression of his deep convictions.

In his discourses it is the truth *alone* the Great Master would hold up to contemplation. It is some great principle he would bring before the mind, and this object is never obscured nor hindered by the form of the illustration. Throughout his whole ministry, whether addressed to crowds or individuals, whether to lawyers or laborers, whether in the gorgeous courts of the temple, or among the homely scenes of Galilee, there is exhibited the same chaste simplicity, because in all there is the same intellectual earnestness. Jesus had no gifts of eloquence to parade, no accomplishments of knowledge to display, no facetiousness of wit to sport; but he had a Gospel of incomparable solemnity to preach, and "how is he straitened till it be accomplished.' In this simplicity Jesus finds followers among those who drink deepest of his spirit. Of such, no one of our day has had more of this spirit, or been more remarkable for this excellence than the late venerable and pious Archibald Alexander. His well known simplicity was only equalled by his deep earnestness. Like the Master whom he followed, he was simple, because he had great and earnest thoughts to communicate.

3. The earnestness of Jesus was further evinced by the *consistency of his life with his doctrine.* The principles which were illustrated by his ministry, occupied habitually the thoughts of his mind. He felt them not only when under occasional discussion, but in all places and at all times. There were moments of relaxation when he escaped from the physical toils of his ministry, but from the influence of his principles, and the force of his convictions, his mind never escapes. Jesus taught nothing which he did not always feel. His life was the exact and ever-faithful transcript of his principles. In the easy, familiar intercourse of friendship with his disciples, or in the bosom of the beloved family of Bethany, he throws off nothing of the habitual gravity, devotion, and spirituality inspired by his principles. In all places, and among all men he maintains unity of character—a dignified consistency with himself. It was the depth of his convictions, and the sincerity of his ul which gave to Jesus the highest form of earnestness—the earnestness of consistency.

4. The earnestness of Jesus was still further manifested in *the decision and boldness of his manner.* The honor of the truth and the immortal interests of men, constitute an object superior to every other. A just apprehension of this object, will raise the minister of Christ above a time-serving and a man-pleasing spirit. Honest convictions despise the temporising suggestions of policy as low and unworthy. In the vindication of the truth, and in the nforcement of its obligations, Jesus was bold and unsparing. The force of his own clear perceptions made him superior to any place, or any presence. He was only intent on the honor of the truth, and the glory of the Father. Truly did he fulfil the prediction of the prophet, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked."

5. It was the manner of Jesus to *rely on a few great general principles* in the work of human reform. It appears to have been our Saviour's philosophy, that to reform the world, and correct the vices of the social life of mankind, what is most needed, is the implantation of right principles. Men have gone down in degeneracy under the perverting operation of evil principles. Their understandings are blind, and their "foolish heart is darkened," and they are now to be raised up and set right, by those fundamental inculcations which comprehend all the rights, and all the duties of man.

Jesus relied on his Gospel to effect the desired reform. He strikes at no particular evil of the social organization of his times. He does not come to the surface of society with his measures of reform, but he descends to the foundation, and disseminates the leaven of correction at the roots of the social tree. Though he lived under a relentless despotism, he did not preach democracy. Though he moved amid scenes of social corruption, he did not organize against any of its forms. Though the world around him rung with the cries and sufferings of the oppressed, yet he raises no standard of revolt, inculcates no violent redress. On the contrary, he enjoins a religious patience, trusting in God and the operation of the Gospel, for the desired improvement of society and mankind.

Jesus was not indifferent to the evils of society ; but to reform the world, he relied on the moral operation of his great evangelical principles. He would bring men up to the moralities of life, by first teaching them the great principles of life. In this manner, silently, and without violence, does he pursue his great work. It was by "the foolishness of preaching" he would save man, and organize against individual and popular sins. Such was the manner of Jesus. It may not imply that other modes of social improvement are unlawful, but this is the "*more excellent way*," which in our times there is danger of losing sight of. Amid the cry and dust of parties and societies, the bright example of the Master escapes us, and we forget that the Gospel is "the wisdom and power of God to salvation."

On the manner of Christ as an instructor, we might greatly enlarge, by adding many graces of character which contribute to the finish, perfection, and glory of the whole. We can barely allude to his self-denial, his superiority to the world, his condescension, his meekness, his diligence, and his prayerfulness.

The last characteristic of our Saviour's manner we now would notice, is his *tenderness*. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" for its redemption. The compassion which inspired the enterprise, accompanied the World's Missionary, as the deep, tender, absorbing sentiment of his soul. How he manifested this sentiment, would be to repeat the whole story of his life. It is true, in this tenderness there is no complacency—no love of approbation ; it was a compassionate feeling, awakened by the guilty, blind, suffering condition of the world. But it was a profound tenderness, which no insolence of treatment, no wanton abuse, no violence, no relentless persecutions could extinguish in his bosom. " He was despised and rejected of men, they hid as it were their faces from him; he was despised, and they esteemed him not," but his pity endured—it survived the cruel return.

Jesus, our blessed Master, loved men in spite of their unloveliness—in spite of their unprovoked enmity. The tide of his compassion seemed to swell in proportion to the wickedness that opposed it. Over that city, capable of the darkest purpose ever formed and enacted on earth, he shed the tears of his compassion, and uttered words of the most tender lament which ever fell on the notice of a guilty world. And on that cross, the last device of ingenious wickedness, planted by his enemies, and gloated on by malignant eyes, he gave the finishing display of his unextinguishable pity, in his prayer for his murderers.

Such, fathers and brethren, is the great Scribe of our profession—our Master and our model. We have presented him only in those clerical aspects of his character which pertain to him as a model, not wholly beyond our approach and imitation. When we contemplate the doctrine and character of Jesus, are we suprised that "he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes?" in those alone, without the aid of his higher nature, there was enough to account for his wonderful power over the minds of men.

In his character of Teacher, is there no reason, alas! for a closer imitation of Jesus, by his servants in the ministry of reconciliation? Where is that purity and simplicity of doctrine, and where are the graces of character and manner which shone in the Master and should adorn his servants? Doubtless they exist as the holy anointing of many a Christian pastor, and diffuse an influence over many a privileged parish, giving authority and progress to the truth among men. Such pure earnest, Christ-imitating lovers and preachers of the truth, cannot fail of success. Following the Master, they will receive the Master's blessing. To such holy men the promise was given and will be fulfilled, "Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you"—" lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

The dignity of our office, its sacredness, the solemnity of its consequences, all urge us to comprehend and feel the nature of its duties in the contemplation of Him, who has put us into this ministry. From Jesus alone we learn that doctrine, and imbibe that spirit which are fundamental to a successful ministry. What is our work, but the exaltation of Christ before men? On him are centred the hopes of a fallen world. Of him then let us learn, and know nothing " save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

SERMON DXCIX.

BY REV. SAMUEL HARRIS.

PITTSFIELD, MASS.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength."—MARK xii. 30.

WERE I to go to you, my hearers, and ask you, one by one "Do you love God?" few of you would be willing distinctly to own that you love him not. Yet if Christ should go through the assembly to pronounce his judgment, to how many might he say, as to the ancient Jews, "I know you that ye have not the love of God in you?" This common reluctance to acknowledge the absence of love to God may be owing to indistinct apprehensions of what is meant by loving him. The single object of this discourse will be to present THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LOVE TO GOD.*

I. True love to God must be founded on a *correct knowledge of his character.*

If you were standing on the summit of the Brocken among the Hartz mountains, some pleasant morning at sunrise, you might see the famous spectre whose mysterious appearance so often has terrified the simple inhabitants. Science has shown it to be only a colossal shadow of the spectator, which, under peculiar circumstances, the rising sun paints on an opposite cloud; but it was long taken for a supernatural object, and the terror-stricken observer bowed down in awe before a magnified image of himself. Just such is God, as he is conceived of by many—nothing better than a magnified image of themselves. This is the charge brought by God himself: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

The gods of the heathen, it is well known, are only magnified men, having all the evil passions of men:

"Gods changeful, jealous, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes are rage, revenge, and lust."

Minds enlightened by the Bible are disgusted with the grossness of this error; yet in a more refined form, they embrace it and shape their idea of God from their own wishes, rather than from the truth. Loving sin themselves, they do not appreciate the holiness of God, which abhors and opposes every sin with an infinite intensity. Partial always to themselves, they do not appreciate the impartiality of God, who condemns them according to their deserts. Regarding God's love as a fondness, blind and partial as their own, they fail to recognize, in their harmony, "the goodness and the severity of God." Changeful themselves, they do not appreciate God's unchangeableness, alike in his requirements, his threatenings and his promises. Short-sighted and inpatient, they do not appreciate the eternal plans of Him with whom one day is as a thousand years, and who through the changes of many generations, pursues his purpose to its accomplishment. Accustomed to act with prime reference to their own interests, they sometimes even settle it as a first principle of their creed, that God must always act as they do, for their personal good, and that whatever their character, he will eternally busy himself to make them blessed; so that God is nothing but the man's own selfish wishes, embodied and clothed with almightiness. Selfishness itself can never be conscious of opposition to such a God. Sin itself will love God, if he is pictured as what the sinner wishes him to be, rather than what he is. So Paul, in his impenitence, thought that he loved God—nay, that he had an extraordinary zeal for him; but he says, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." When the law of God, applied to his conscience, showed him God's true character, he found himself an enemy of God. Such a discovery is essential to the beginning of true love to God in every unrenewed heart. True love to God fastens, not on a god of the human imagination, but on the God of the Bible—the holy, the just, the good.

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* The reader will find a full discussion of this subject in Dr. Bellamy's unrivalled work entitled, "True religion delineated and distinguished from all counterfeits." While this sermon is an independent discussion of the subject, occasional coincidence of thought will be noticed, which it has not been found possible to avoid.

II. Love to God implies *complacency in his character.*

Mere knowledge does not insure love. If the heart delights not in a character, the knowledge of that character will awaken hatred; and in this case, the clearer and more accurate the knowledge the greater the dislike. The more closely opposite natures are made to know each other, and are brought into contact, the more powerfully they are repelled. Hence a clear knowledge of God in those whose hearts do not delight in him, only arouses the hidden enmity of the heart. Satan, of all creatures, knows God the best, and hates him the most. Hence, while those who love God, when they go into his presence in eternity, and there discover his character as they had never discovered it before, break out uncontrollably into praise,—those of a contrary character, when they, in eternity, behold God in all his holiness and glory—when they behold him as he actually is—begin at once, and continue for ever, to curse and to blaspheme him.

You sometimes say of a man, "The more I know him, the more I dislike him." This may be owing to his wickedness, which you more and more discover. But his must be a fearful depravity, if, the more clearly and correctly he knows the actual character of God's spotless holiness, the more he dislikes it. Yet such must be the fact, unless there be in the heart a complacency in God's character. On this point, therefore, I insist, that love to God implies complacency or delight in his character.

This complacency implies delight in God. You see a company of men before a fine painting; some will be enraptured with its beauty; others will express no delight in it. The reason is, that the former have, the latter have not, a taste for such beauties. There is a beauty in holiness as really as in a painting; the highest of all beauty is the beauty of holiness; and the highest form of that highest beauty is the beauty of holiness as it appears in God. They who love God appreciate that beauty; they delight in it; they love to contemplate it as it appears in God's attributes, as it is revealed in his Word, as it is exhibited in his acts of providence and grace, and especially as it shines in Jesus Christ. So it is with the angels and the glorified spirits; they are enraptured with the loveliness of God's character, so that they never tire of praising it; "they rest not day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.'" So it is, in their measure, with all who love God on earth: they are delighted with the holiness of his character; the more they see of him, as he has revealed himself in his word and his works, the more they delight in him; and they say, "Who is a God like unto thee? Thy name alone is excellent, and thy glory is exalted above the heavens."

It is because those who love God feel this complacency in his character that praise is the natural language of love.

But complacency in God implies more than that delight in him which expends itself in contemplating and praising him; it implies also, oneness of feeling with God; oneness of desires and aims, and similarity of disposition. It implies loving what God loves, and abhorring what he abhors.

Entire contrariety of disposition makes complete, full-orbed love impossible. A virtuous person cannot render perfect love to a vicious one: nor a vicious person to the virtuous. I know that a poet has ascribed to woman such words as these:

"I know not, I ask not, if there's guilt in thy heart;
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art."

And these words are continually quoted as the strongest expression the very highest triumph of woman's love. But, my hearers, the love that is not impaired, that does not lose something in discovering the criminality of its object, must be a love that sympathizes with that criminality. It is possible, indeed, for virtuous love to survive even that deadliest blow—the discovery of criminality in the person loved. The parent may love his child, the wife her husband, the sister her brother, the son his parent, after the loved one has lost in drunkenness all that dignifies humanity. That love may follow its cherished object in infamy, yearn over him in prison, and on the scaffold, and garner up his memory, when his name, by all the world beside, is consigned to loathing. But if the heart which thus loves is itself virtuous, that love, strong as it is, yet wants a most important element: it is love without esteem; it is love without complacency; it is the conflict in which nature and good-will draw you toward one who is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, and yet every exhibition of his character repels you with shuddering abhorrence. It is love, indeed—love living and active—but love that is maimed, and bleeds and groans as it goes forth to yearn over the cherished one. If your own heart is virtuous, criminality in one you love opens an impassible chasm between your soul and his. You two can never be one again, unless you sink to sympathy with his pollution, or he rises to delight in your virtue.

Precisely this deficiency exists in God's love to impenitent sinners. It is love throbbing with the pulsations of God's infinite heart, strong even unto the cross for their rescue; outlasting in the pleadings of a divine compassion years of crime and rebellion, yet destitute of the most essential element of love—destitute of complacency—abhorring the character of the sinner with an intensity of which only God is capable.

But if this contrariety of character impairs and cripples even the love of the virtuous for the vicious, how much more the love of the vicious heart. If the father's love for the prodigal son is impaired by the son's criminality, how much more the son, while in the midst of his riot and his harlots, was void of true love to his father. If even the love of God to sinners is robbed of its most precious element by this contrariety of character, how destitute of true love to God is the sinner in his worldliness and disobedience. Complacency in God, sweet accord with his character, he has none. He is opposed to God, and God is opposed to him.

Sin, then, is a fearful chasm between the sinner and God, which can in no way be crossed, unless God lay aside his holiness, sink to delight in sin, and fold the foulest to his bosom; or unless the sinner turn from his sins, and, washed and made clean, be folded to the bosom of infinite purity and love. This is the great gulf fixed. In the world to come, impassible from either side; in this life, the same yawning gulf, separating the sinner from God, until, by repentance, he returns and bows, in faith and submission, before the holy throne.

Here you may see the application to yourselves, it may be, of those fearful words: "The carnal mind is enmity against God." It is difficult for the most of those whom we usually see in this house of God—for you who, if you think of God at all, think of him respectfully—for you who honor and support the institutions of religion—for you whose every thought of religion is kind and respectful—it is difficult for you to persuade yourselves that this fearful character belongs to you. You are ready to say: "It must be applicable only to those blasphemers who oppose religion in all its institutions, and hurl defiance at the throne of God." My hearers, I do not charge you with blasphemy or disrespect for religion; I do not charge you, that, in your inmost thoughts, you are conscious of thinking of God with hatred. But the charge is, that yon have not complacency in God's character that there is a contrariety between your disposition, your aims, your cherished plans and God's. The energies of God's moral nature are concentrated in abhorrence of sin: you are careless about the fact that you are a sinner; you sometimes even acknowledge, "I know that I am a sinner, but cannot feel it." God has shown his earnestness to deliver men from sin in all the wondrous history of the incarnation and the cross; he speaks it in all the earnest warnings and entreaties of the Gospel. But you are a sinner, and are careless; you are the person described in those astonishing words—a CARELESS SINNER. The Son of God shed his blood for sin; you shed not a tear. God is intent on establishing Christ's kingdom in the world; you make not this the great end of your endeavours; it is not the object on which your heart is set: your object is self and the world. God lives to do good; you live to please self. God is love; you are selfishness. Can there be a greater contratrity of aims, of interests, of feelings, of character, than between yourself and God? And does not this make applicable, as a description of your character, the emphatic words, "Enmity against God?" Be assured, there is no true love to God without complacency in him—complacency which implies both delight in the beauty of his holiness and a heart to praise it, and an agreement of disposition, aims, and character, with his. And he who has been separated from God by sin can begin to love him only by returning in penitence and trust, and submitting cordially to all his will.

It must be added, that this complacency in God, when it really exists, will continually be producing assimilation to him. This is a neccessary effect of such love.

"Whate'er thou lovest, man, that too, become thou must,
God, if thou lovest God; dust if thou lovest dust."

Because love causes delights in contemplating the beloved character, and produces sympathy and accord of tastes, aims, and desires, there must result a growing assimilation of character. A virtuous woman, however she may love a vicious son or husband, withholds this highest element of love—esteem and complacency; and this withholding is essential to save her from becoming like him. When she begins to lose her abhorrence for his character, the last stay of her virtue is broken, and she sinks into the likeness of him she loves. And once implant in the heart of that wanderer, a love for some virtuous one—once awaken him to feel a kindling delight in this character beaming on him from the object of his love, and his reform is already begun, and will continue, if that love continues, till he attains the likeness of that virtue, the love of which has already begun to refresh his soul.

So it is in the affairs of religion—and a fearful thought it is to the worldling—to those whose hearts delight in the low and debasing. If you are saying to gold, "Thou art my hope," and to the most fine gold, "Thou art my confidence; if your heart is fastened on sensual joys, or idolizes the objects of ambition—"Whate'er thou lovest, man, that too, become thou must"—slowly but inevitably, by the silent influences of that very love, must your own heart be changed into the likeness of the earthly, the sensual, the devilish. But when once you begin to delight in the beauty of God's holiness—when your heart begins to beat in unison with his, going out in the same pure desires toward the same holy end, it is the beginning, however faint, of that assimilation to God which shall issue in the fulfilment of the sublimest promise ever made to man: "Ye shall see him as he is, and shall be like him:" ye shall see him in all the glories which awaken the enraptured praises of angels, and even thus ye shall be like him.

III. Love to God implies *desire for him.* Delight in his character awakens desire for his person.

We find our happiness in those whom we love. If we love God, we find our happiness in him. This was expressed by the saints of old in language such as this: "Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come near even unto his seat." "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee. My soul followeth hard after God. There be many that say, 'Who will show us any good?' Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me."

We desire a better acquaintance with those whom we love. If we love God, we study with interest his character as revealed in his word and in his works, for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with him. So Moses prayed, "O Lord I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

We are pained to be separated from those whom we love, and we think of them much in absence; so if we love God, we shall think of him; we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches. When I awake, I am still with thee."

We seek the society of those whom we love; so if we love

God we seek communion with him. Prayer, which is speaking to God, is our delight. The closet, where we offer our requests, and receive the quickening of his Spirit, is a loved and frequented spot; and even amid the bustle of the world, we walk with God and commune with him in the silence of our own spirits. Thus shall we, like the apostle, "continue in prayer, and watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication, night and day, praying exceedingly."

We value the favor of those whom we love. Their displeasure cuts to the heart; but we are happy in their smile and their return of our confidence and affection. If we love God, we dread his displeasure; it grieves us to the very heart to think that we have displeased him; we are watchful not to disregard his will. But his favor is our joy.

"Let earth, with all its joys combine;
While thou art near, in vain they call:
One smile—one blissful smile of thine,
My dearest Lord outweighs them all,"

"Thy loving kindness is better than life." The loving soul, renouncing all else finds his blessedness in God. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

IV. Love to God implies *benevolence* or *goodwill*. This is implied in all love; we long to do good to those whom we love. If we love God, we feel goodwill toward him. But it is impossible to bestow favors on God, because he has no need. Goodwill toward him must show itself in some other way. This is by seeking to glorify him. If he were a creature, needy and dependent, goodwill would show itself by ministering to his need. He is the Creator and Lord of all; goodwill shows itself by giving to him the glory due unto his name.

God claims to be the Sovereign of the universe; he claims the right to rule over all his creatures. Says Bellamy, "He is disposed to take state to himself, and honor, and majesty, the kingdom, the power and the glory; and he sets up himself as the Most High God, supreme Lord, and sovereign Governor of the whole world; and bids all worlds adore him, and be in most perfect subjection to him, and that with all their hearts; and esteems the wretch who does not account this his highest happiness worthy of eternal damnation. God thinks it infinitely becómes him to set himself up for a GOD, and to command all the world to adore him. He thinks himself fit to govern the world, and that the throne is his proper place, and that all love, honor, and obedience, are his due. 'I am the Lord,' says he, 'and beside me there is no God. I am Jehovah; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another. And thus shall ye do, for I am the Lord. And cursed be every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them,' Now, it would be infinitely wicked for the highest angel in heaven to assume any of this honor to himself; but it infinitely becomes the Most High God thus to do." If we love God, his conduct in this will please us; it will appear to us fit and right; we shall rejoice to see him taking the throne, and surrounding himself with state, and making all creatures minister to his glory. Our first and strongest desire will be for his honor; so that when we pray we shall wish to begin with the petition which is set down for us first in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name;" and we shall not find in our hearts to close except with the ascription there enjoined, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever." The language of our hearts will be, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. Be thou exalted above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. Let the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of man be brought low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted."

This disposition will lead us, also, to desire to have all the world, in like manner, rejoice in God's supremacy, and give him the glory due unto his name. Hence it sometimes is found giving utterance to the strongest desires that all creatures would join in extolling God, calling even on sun, moon and stars, earth, air and sea, birds, beasts and fishes, mountains and all hills, the trees and the winds, to praise him. "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength. Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his works, in all places of his dominion. Let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent.'

And because God has sent his Son into the world, and set up his cross; because he has set his heart on bringing sinners to Christ, and establishing his kingdom, good-will toward God will be good-will toward his kingdom, which will concern itself with intense zeal to advance its interests and to bring men to Christ. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The Church, the bride of Christ, joins with his Spirit in extending the invitations of the Gospel. "And let him that heareth, say, Come." Every one who hears and accepts the invitation becomes animated by the same interest in the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, and joins with the Spirit in extending the invitations of the Gospel.

So great and so disinterested is this concern for God's honor and the advancement of his cause, that whatever is likely to dishonor God, causes the most grievous anxiety, and no personal advantage can be so much as looked at as a compensation. 'Thus' says God to Moses: 'This is a stiff-necked people; let me alone that I may destroy them in a moment; and I will make of thee a great nation.' But, says Moses: 'What will become of thy great name? What will the Egyptians say? What will all the nations round about say?' And he mourns and wrestles, cries and prays, begs and pleads, as if his heart would break; and, says he, 'If I may not be heard, but this dishonor and reproach must come upon thy name, it cannot comfort me to tell me of making me a great nation: pray, let me rather die, and be forgotten forever, and let not my name be numbered among the living: let it be blotted out of thy book.' Well, says God, 'I will hear thee. But as truly as I live, the whole world shall know what a holy and sin-hating God I am; for the carcasses of all these who have treated me thus shall fall in the wilderness, and here they shall wander till forty years are accomplished.' And now, Moses is content to forego the greatness promised to himself, and to forego the entrance to the promised land, to live all his remaining days in the wilderness, and do, and suffer, and undergo anything, if God will but take care of his great name."

V. Love implies a *desire to please.* This thought is involved in what has been already said, but it deserves a separate consideration.

When little Velma was about to go to church one morning, her father asked her if it did not tire her to sit still so long. She said it did. "Then," said he, "it will be better for you to stay at home with me." "No," she answered; "I shall go; Cousin says, God wants to have us; and it is not much to do it, if he wants us to." This is most childlike and artless; and yet it is the expression of love, foregoing personal comfort with the simple motive of pleasing the one we love—of doing what "he wants us to." Childlike as it is, it is the most powerful motive of the Gospel. It is peculiar to the Gospel to reveal God in Christ as a personal friend, to be loved at once with a childlike artlessness and an overpowering devotedness. It is the yearning of love to do something for its object; but God is so great, what present, what token of love, can we bring him? What can we do for him? The Gospel brings him near to us in Christ, as a personal friend, and gives us the privilege of doing something for him—of acting with the simple desire to please him. Religion presents itself often with the sanctions and insignia of authority; it appeals to the sense of duty; it comes with the majesty of sublime principle. But in the heart renewed under the Gospel, it wells up as the outgushing of a simple, childlike love—simple, yet mighty; and under its power, the disciple rejoices in toil and suffering, to please the Redeemer, whom, not having seen, he loves. Christ comes and says, "Do this for my sake;" and this is the peculiar and the conquering motive of the Gospel. "The love of Christ constraineth us." We labor for his sake. There would be more simplicity, power, and blessedness in our religion, if, joined with the sternness of duty and the majesty of principle, there were more of this artless, devoted love to the person of Christ; if oftener, under the toils of life, we listened to his voice saying, "Do this for my sake," and were animated by the thought that we please him by our endeavors.

It is the nature of love to enthrone its object. The requests of those whom we love come with the force of commands; and their authority is proportioned to the degree of our love. Whatever we love best must therefore be enthroned the absolute monarch of our hearts. If love even to our fellow-creatures has a power to enthrone them, and make their slightest wishes law, how much more must all true love to the great God enthrone him in the heart, and give authority to even the least of his commands. If we love God, we shall be bent on keeping his commandments, and that not by constraint, but with the eagerness of love, which sacredly regards his slightest wish as law—which accepts his commands, not as fetters, but as ornaments of grace to the head, as bracelets on the hands, and a chain of gold about the neck.

God is the only being worthy of supreme affection, and the only being whom it is safe thus to love, and by loving to enthrone. Because love, in proportion to its strength, enthrones the beloved object, and binds the loving heart in willing servitude, there is something terrific in the very thought of supreme love for what is sinful and unworthy—of giving the mastery of the soul, the control of all hidden springs of action, to base men or to ignoble objects. If it be gold that is thus loved, or sensual pleasures, or the hollow echoes of human applause—alas, that a soul should love, and, by loving, should enthrone such objects, and abase itself in willing slavery to be their drudge and pander. God is the only being worthy of supreme love; the only being whom it is safe thus to love, and, by loving, to enthrone the absolute monarch of the heart.

Such are the characteristics of true love to God. Whether you exercise this love or not, it is not for me to decide. I leave the question to the scrutiny and decision of your own consciences, and of God, who judgeth the heart. But this I must say—without such love, you are without hope and without God in the world. There is no holiness in heaven—no, not in the highest angel—except what springs from true love to God. There is no religion on earth, no preparation for heaven, except in love to God. Without it, you are alienated from your Maker, and the subject of his wrath; you are fitting yourself for everlasting banishment from the bosom of his holiness and the heaven of his glory. O, creatures of God, can you see nothing in his character which awakens your heart to love? Is there nothing in the majesty of his throne—nothing in the beauty of his holiness—nothing in the tenderness of the cross, which awakens one throb of emotion, one breath of praise, one aspiration to be like him? In all that is glorious in God, can you see nothing to love? Oh, that, as you gaze on his excellence, it were the language of your hearts,

> "This is the God whom we do love;
> This is the God whom we adore;
> In him we trust; to him we live:
> He is our all for evermore."

"This God is our God for ever and ever, He shall be our guide even until death."

A FATHER'S INFLUENCE.

It must exert a vast influence upon a parent to reflect how perfectly God has subjected the minds of his children to his forming hand. His authority is absolute. In this respect he cannot possibly have any higher advantage. As a ruler, no one questions his right to entire obedience. There is no thought of displacing him by election. There are no tendencies to revolution in his little empire. His subjects are so manifestly inferior and dependent, that there is no necessity for tumults within, nor is there any considerable danger of interferences from without. He has the power of completely controlling their instruction. Furnished with the richest stores of knowledge in the Divine Word, he employs the same truths in the same divine connections which God employs in the conversion and sanctification of men. He makes the authority of God himself subserve his purpose. He has the pre-occupancy of the mind and the promised aid of the Holy Spirit. It is, perhaps, impossible for us to appreciate the advantage of an access to the mind in precedence of all others, and the value of the opportunity of introducing the doctrines of the Gospel before depravity has had sufficient time, and acquired skill enough to bar up the avenues of truth. It is obvious, that Christianity, though in every other respect the same, would have been placed under peculiar disadvantages if the human family had been all created, as we suppose angels were, in the maturity of their powers. We know not that the Gospel could be propagated at all in a world full of mature beings, involved in a common rebellion. The power of God, it is true, is not to be limited; but we do know, at least, that his power and wisdom are both magnified by spreading the triumphs of his religion, through the influence of instruction introduced in the happy, favored period of childhood.

merely; you are certain of it, if you will do your best to insure it. You cannot, under any possible circumstances, stand up in your place among the lost, and shake your raiment, and say, " I am clean from my own blood." On the contrary, if you perish, though others may have contracted guilt, your blood will be pre-eminently on your own head.

The souls of men cannot perish without involving somebody in the guilt of soul-murder. The body may die by the operations of natural law. Its dissolution may be only a blessing—the taking down of a comparatively incommodious and even vile tabernacle, that the indwelling spirit may go to reside in heavenly mansions; but the *soul* cannot die but by an unnatural death; it can only perish by murder and suicide. Take heed that its blood stain not your garments. Apply to Christ for cleansing, and see to it, that, through his atoning blood, you may be prepared to walk with him in white.—*Rev. Dr. Parker.*

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LIFE—NOT DEATH—THE GREAT ARGUMENT FOR RELIGION.

> "I shall not die, but live."—PSALM cxviii. 17.
>
> "Godliness is profitable unto all things, HAVING PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS, and of that which is to come."—1 TIM. iv. 8.

PERHAPS the most common argument for religion is, that men must die. We are exhorted to consider our latter end; and to prepare for death. DEATH is the tremendous word which gives emphasis to every appeal.

In our view—as the end of Probation—death may well excite emotions of solemnity. Yet I fear that this mode of speaking to some minds, may obscure the present necessity of religion. Its sole value is as a preparation for another world. Thus, its utility is postponed to the extreme point of life. It is not necessary to us now, except as we are in danger of dying suddenly, and as a prudent man will be insured against the least exposure. But for the present we hold it, not in use, but in reserve. So long as we are in the full tide of life, we need it not. It is only as a provision for a distant futurity. Such is the impression often produced though it be not intended.

It is a high motive, also, to parental faithfulness, to know that it exerts a wide influence in sustaining the blessings of civil government, and in the advancement of spiritual religion. It is highly probable that there would be no civil government on earth if it were not for family government; and it never will be known, till the light of eternity reveals it, how much a few well-governed and well-instructed families do to prevent states and empires from rushing into the horrors of anarchy. Then the example of parental faithfulness, with the blessings that are seen to attend it, powerfully draws men to Christ. Nor does it merely attract men, as individuals, to a spiritual worship of God. It leads families to their Saviour. Many a parent has been won to Christ by seeing how a Christian family is blessed through the influence of family religion. And when such a one is turned to God, it is like the conversion of a king among idolatrous tribes: the whole government becomes a sanctified one, and entire households are trained up for the service of the Lord. Besides, no mortal can estimate the influence of paternal faithfulness upon future generations. To a reflecting mind, that is a mighty scheme of influence which is indicated by the words of the prophet: " Tell ye your children of it, and let them tell their children, and their children another generation." That is to say, let holy sentiments, sound instruction, stern principles of right pass from lip to lip, from an individual to a family; from each one of its members to a wider circle; and so on, increasing in a rapidly augmented ratio, till a multitude, like a nation, shall have their minds and hearts cast into the mould of a godly ancestor.

What a weight of responsibleness rests upon a Christian father! Household piety lies at the foundation of all right religious culture, and of the success of the Church of God. There the influence of the Gospel appears in its might, exerting itself under the most advantageous circumstances possible; there is authority absolute, yet tempered with parental affection, softened by maternal kindness and enforced by a mother's echo of paternal authority, and by the example of a dignified, Sarah-like submission. There is instruction, rich, various and solid, introduced into the mind in the most favored period. Let parents, then, address themselves to their chief work on earth, the training of their children for the service of God. Let them wait upon the Lord for the aids of his grace. Let them remember that the time is short; that their influence must be exerted now; that they shall soon meet their dear ones at the bar of God; that they shall see them there polluted with sin, scathen with thunder and crushed to hell; or they shall meet them clothed in robes of unsullied purity, with crowns of gold on their heads, and entering with songs and transports into the Kingdom of Christ.—*Rev. Dr. Parker.*

FREEDOM FROM SOUL-MURDER.

Fathers and mothers! you are the ministers of God to your children. Your flock is, indeed, less numerous than that of the public preacher of the Gospel; but you have, on that very account, a more perfect supervision over them. Your obligations do not respect so large a number; but you are under a weightier responsibility in regard to each one of your little flock than any minister can be in respect to each one of his more numerous charge. The principles that bind you to faithfulness are the same as those that impose obligations upon the pastor. You may become guilty of soul-murder. Nor will the fact that you are not a professor of religion diminish in the least the guilt of your unnatural neglect of the spiritual well-being of your offspring. Their souls are of unspeakable worth. If you discharge your duty in teaching them, and in praying for the illuminations of the Divine Spirit; if you endeavor, with pious solicitude, to win them to their Saviour, you may hope to be, under God, the instrument of their salvation. If you neglect them, they may be lost for ever, and you may be unable to stand up and shake your raiment, and say, with Paul, "I am pure from the blood of all men," or even to say, "I am pure from the blood of my own dear children."

The obligation to secure the well-being of persons bears some proportion to the degree of probability with which success may be expected. If the minister of the Gospel knew certainly that his efforts would be of no avail, then he could not be guilty of soul-murder; because it could not be said that any sinner ever perished as a consequence of his want of fidelity. But the probabilities are great that he shall succeed in gaining some, if he is faithful and persevering in his efforts. Parents enjoy greater prospects of succees. If they are faithful, earnest, and persevering in their endeavors, they are almost sure of ultimate success. Yet neither the devout and faithful minister nor the pious parent can be absolutely certain that they shall have success in a given case. It may be that they shall be compelled, at last, to look on the object of their solicitude, and say, "Your blood be upon your own head: I am clean." But their can be no such uncertainty in respect to *your own* case. The parent has a more complete supervision over his child than the pastor has over an individual of his public charge. If the parent fail therefore, through his own unfaithfulness, it is a more awful delinquency. He has less exposure to failure; he has better advantages, and better prospects of success. But you have a still more complete supervision over yourself than the parent has over his child; you have greater probability of success not

But when it has roused the mind it has another office—to control it; to keep it from rushing into disordered action. For the safe conduct of life, man needs to be pressed by two forces—Stimulus and Restraint. And one must balance the other.

It is so common to speak of Religion as a consoler in sorrow, that an impression is given that its chief value is to be the pillow of sickness, and the last refuge of the unhappy. It is summoned to soothe mental anguish, and to make death easy. Hence strong men feel that it is necessary only for those whose nerves are weak. It is not required in the noon of lusty life, but only for the palsied and trembling old man, sitting in the twilight of age.

Physical strength and hardihood breed self-reliance. Hence it is the boast of men firm in body and in mind that they are competent to govern themselves. The vulgar need religion, but they do not need it. Alas! that extreme confidence is their greatest danger. Their physical strength is their spiritual weakness. For when the frame stands strong, the hot blood rushes through it like a river. Then the eye flashes fire, and the veins are swoolen with passion. Nature is unmanageable. Its impulses will not be restrained. Heroic firmness, which could bear any shock of calamity, is utterly impotent to withstand the violence of passion. If religion be needed to support decrepitude and decay, it is far more so to check the impetuosity of manhood. For that is the period of most rapid and decisive action. Then is the greatest danger of committing mortal sins, and of throwing away life and happiness. At such a moment ordinary rules of virtue are swept away like a light bark on a stormy sea. It needs a stronger power at the helm. It is only the fear of that God who rules in heaven, that can hold the spirit in awe, and keep man from the desperate acts which would drown his soul in guilt and woe.

Nor is this necessity of religion superseded by any natural sagacity or swiftness of thought. It is the error of many active and brilliant intellects, that while the ignorant may require a revelation, their superior intelligence stands in no need of supernatural light.

But it is the high and soaring intellect which requires it most. For if it penetrates farther than other minds, it but ranges round a wider circumference of darkness.

Perhaps of all men he who most needs the light of faith, is the man of genius. His soul is all imagination and sensibility, and is exposed to a far keener suffering than pierces common minds. It is ever on the wing, "wandering through eternity;" exploring the regions of the dead, and conjecturing its own fate hereafter. In these flights it is attacked by doubts and fears to which most are strangers. Gross natures feel only sharp physical pain. They cannot follow the rapid thought of a mind of this etherial temper, nor understand its intellectual suffering. A torpid nature is protected by its dulness and stupidity. It sleeps by the cataract, while this restless and tortured spirit hovers and screams over the abyss.

Who can tell what the poet Shelly—troubled by those "questionings which haunt the eternal mind"—suffered from perplexity? He had begun by casting off old beliefs; by doubting and denying; and he ended in total skepticism and despair. Such has been the sad result of many an earnest spirit, forever speculating, yet unable to find the truth.

What is the first necessity of such a mind? Is it not faith in God—a glimpse of divine goodness, breaking through the clouds like "the clear shining after rain," and

"Casting on the dark its gracious bow."

This alone relieved the fearful gloom which hung over the spirit of Cowper.

Genius—it is not too much to say—has an affinity to God. In such natures there are mighty instincts which draw them towards the future and the invisible; and wretched indeed is the mind which ranges the universe, and finds no place of rest!

But further—as the intellect is transcendent, its ambition is excited. The mind is "vital in every part." It is seized with a passionate thirst for glory, and religion is needed to restrain its wildness. Many are the instances in history of great minds intoxicated, and finally maddened, because they had not that self control which religion gives. The action of the brain becomes fearfully rapid. Faster and faster the spirit whirls. The passions flame like a volcano, until the burning mountain crumbles to ashes.

There is a danger to which excitable and ambitious minds are the most exposed. It is that of INSANITY. God often punishes intellectual pride with madness. When men of extraordinary talent yield the whole force of their minds to unscrupulous selfishness, the vehemence of their passions not unfrequently overwhelms their intellects. Reason totters on her throne, and the great mind becomes a melancholy wreck.

Against this terrible disaster religion is the best security. It is the great balancing and restoring power of the mind. It moderates ambition. It checks the violence of the will. It soothes the agitated breast. While, by its cheerful and hopeful character, it keeps the spirit from sinking into melancholy—a milder madness. There is a mournful argument for religion, in the vast number of the learned and the powerful who, without it, have perished in their pride. For want of this many of the greatest minds that ever existed have gone to utter ruin.

But if this intellectual catastrophe be averted, still more melancholy is the moral retribution which overtakes such a man. Observe a mind like Voltaire's—of infinite subtlety and wit—possessing the activity of a disembodied spirit, but prostituting genius to the spread of false and poisonous principles. How perverted becomes the moral nature by this life of evil. The venom is sucked into the blood, and cannot be cast forth.

Awful is the death struggle of such a spirit—proud, daring and defiant. What terrific agony it endures before it goes to judgment. The human mind, when once disordered by a long course of evil, has no power of self recovery. Reason alone saves no man. No matter how lofty the genius, or how vast the knowledge collected in one mind—if that mind breaks away from God, it goes to destruction. If the planet Jupiter once departed from the sun, it would rush to chaos as swiftly as the smallest asteroid that revolves unseen in the heavens. So all life emanates from God, and must revolve around that central sun. A mind that has lost this divine attraction, and begins to waver in its orbit, will drop from heaven like a falling star. Then the relics of the majestic intellect only make more vivid the impending ruin—like the lights of a ship, that flash on dark and angry waves, and show that she is hopelessly in the power of the storm.

Proud philosophy! How many hast thou destroyed whom religion would have saved. The learned infidel may laugh at the poor cottager who walks by faith, and morning and evening directs his prayer to Heaven. But that poor man, with his simple piety, is more likely to be truly happy, to be kept from daring sins, and to be saved in the great day of judgment, than the man of science with all his philosophy. Genius has left a million wrecks upon the shore of time. But religion—not one. Where is the man whom religion has undone? What mind has it shattered? What heart has it broken? Christianity has no such ruined beings to answer for. The grace of God infallibly brings salvation!

But—if no such fearful danger impended over the too violent or misdirected action of the mind—still it is easy to perceive that sin destroys the chaste beauty of the soul, and robs the character of an indefinable grace. It makes the motives low and selfish, and even renders the range of thought narrow and limited. It gives to the whole mind a sordid and petty character. Even talent is sure to breed conceit, and to make its possessor pretentious and absurd.

On the other hand, religion, united to genius, imparts to it a spiritual and angelic beauty. It preserves the great from the intoxication of power. It teaches the exalted how to wear their honors with humility.

Then what majesty it gives to the whole man. "Religion," says Daniel Webster, "is an indispensable element in every great human character." True, there have been men of vast capacity—men forcible in action—that had not a thought of religion. But I do not believe that all the ages of human history ever produced a truly sublime character without this divine inspiration. Approach these heroes of the world, and you always find in them something coarse and low. Religion alone is the inspirer of greatness. It unchains man from the earth. Prometheus is unbonnd. The soul is led away from itself—away into infinity—"beyond the solar walk or milky way." Thus religion feeds the intellect with vast conceptions, and the heart with noble examples. It inspires enthusiasm for that which is great and holy. Thus it multiplies resplendent instances of virtue from generation to generation.

Religion, then, is the great want of all men—of the learned as well as the ignorant—of the mighty as well as the weak, every class in society has its peculiar want of it. The poor need it, to keep them from being envious; and the rich, to keep them from being proud. The wretched need it to cheer their sad lot; and the great to moderate their ambition. It raises the miserable out of the dust, and keeps the favored of Fortune from plunging to perdition. All then alike need religion as their preserver. All have duties to perform, and temptations to resist. All will find trials in their course through life, which it alone can make supportable.

Why then virtually postpone religion by telling men that they need it to prepare for death? as if they had no use for it until they reached that gloomy shore. This mode of speaking comes from a false idea of religion, as if it were something apart from man himself, and which could be applied to him like extreme unction at the last moment of life. But no, religion is an internal principle, or rather it includes all right principles. It is, therefore, the regulator of all man's judgment, passions and will, bringing them into harmony with truth and reason.

And is this a thing which can be postponed? Can peace, patience and mercy be deferred? Are a spirit of love and a principle of duty, virtues which it is as well to have years hence as now? Nay, can life go on at all as it ought without these primary conditions of well-being? It cannot be. No —not for an hour. If I delay one hour, then that is an hour lost. If I defer it till to-morrow, then I am deferring so long my happiness. Then I am doomed to pass one more day of misery. Its sorrows I must bear alone. If I have tears to shed, I shall find no comforter. And can I afford to lose even one day of existence? Are my days so many that I can afford to drag on one after another in weariness and pain.

Thus we attach a value to every passing hour. I acknowledge no pre-eminence of the day of one's death over an ordinary day of life. I cannot understand that religion should be more important at one period than at another—at the hour of dissolution than at this moment. If man's happiness depend on the proper government of his mind, that government is as necessary now as at any future period of existence. I admit that there are certain crisis of life—moments of agony, in which ages of suffering are concentrated into an hour: and when the absence of this great consolation may be felt most bitterly. So it may be when the memories and reproaches of a life mis-spent, rush upon the dying soul. The moment of death too is unspeakably solemn as the limit of opportunity—the last light of day.

But beyond that I see not that religion is more important at the hour of death than at this hour. *Now, and always, and everywhere*, it is the great necessity of man.

We see then that the chief argument for religion is, not coming death, but actual life. We need no spectre of a King of Terrors to warn us against taking guilt upon our souls while these breasts palpitate with a life which guilt may render more terrible than death.

Nay, more. We need not send forward our imagination into a dark eternity to derive additional horrors from that tremendous gloom. Why repeat so often the lamentations of hell, as if here on earth we did not hear weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth? Is there not misery here as well as there?

We will not cross the boundary of this world in search of terrors. Before our eyes is suffering enough to affright us from evil. There is no end to the misery of man. All round the earth comes the wail of millions—lamenting, cursing, and despairing. Yea, in our own breasts has been felt that mortal agony which makes the place of future punishment so fearful. We have already tasted the bitterness of death. Whoever has felt remorse—he knows what hell is. REMORSE—that word of which a dying statesman said, men knew not the meaning—who has not felt its sting? When in a moment of passion we have given way to a burst of fury, venting our rage in a torrent of bitter words, or doing some cruel, but irrevocable act, then comes a reaction. Then arise shame and self-reproach. Then drop the bitter, burning tears. I suppose that every man of sensibility has at times suffered a mental anguish, which, were it perpetual, would lead him to say, It is better for me to die then to live.

All that anguish, religion would have prevented. And if we have it now, it will avert such agonies a thousand times hereafter. It is not, therefore, merely to save your souls in a distant futurity; but to save them now, to deliver them from innumerable woes, that we fly to this great source of strength and of peace.

Why should I defer this great necessity of my being? No—not to-morrow, but to-day. I am not willing to suffer one hour of wretchedness which religion would prevent.

Nor would I lose the present happiness it confers. For it is not in heaven alone that it blesses the soul. It has promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. It makes happy beings here as well as there. Religion deepens joy, causing every current of gladness to rush through the heart in a fuller stream. It takes away the feverishness of ordinary pleasure, and breathes over the spirit a holy calm. There is a peculiar countenance which I have never seen but in religious men. It is full of sensibility and benevolence. But its chief expression is Peace. No one can look into such a face, and not be fascinated by it. There is a clearness and depth in the eye, as of a lake with no dark and troubled currents beneath. And what meaning in its smile! That gentle radiation of the features passes over the placid countenance like a breath of air, rippling still and tranquil waters. This is the very spirit of the skies, and it bears light and joy wherever it is wafted over the earth.

If this train of thought be just, then the manner in which Death is often presented as an argument for religion, has no force in it. A prominence is given to that event, as if it were not merely a change of existence, but life's final and overwhelming catastrophe. And indeed it is to be feared, that, though not avowed, such an apprehension creeps into the thoughts, and that good men reason for religion with infidel arguments.

But what is death? Is it a pause of life—a rest of the soul until the resurrection—until the ages of human history shall be complete? Then it is not to be feared. For it suffers nothing. It is still and voiceless. It utters no sound. It feels no pain. How much more fearful is this trembling, throbbing life which now has hold of us: that quivers like a reed shaken by the wind. Not a breath blows upon it but makes it tremble with joy or grief. The chambers of death are silent; all is tranquility and peace. But the halls of life ring with shouts of conflict—with bursts of passion and of tears. The dead weep no more. The only tears that water the grave are shed by the living, as they stand over the silent dust. Indeed, if death were but a long sleep we might welcome him as an aged friend, who comes to take us to rest in his arms.

In that slumber and repose there is nothing to be afraid of. The mere departing from the world has in it no terror, except as whatever is enveloped with mystery excites a vague dread. In such cases we fear though we know not what we fear. But mere dissolution has neither joy nor pain. It furnishes no argument for religion. Indeed it proves nothing one way or the other.

But some think to make us start back by describing death as attended with circumstances of physical horror. Certain minds delight to awaken terror, and they labor to collect around death every gloomy image. They love to harrow the feelings of those who hear them by speaking in sepulchral tones of the corpse, and the winding-sheet, and the clod falling on the coffin.

There is a connection in which these images of man's mortality may teach a useful lesson. For example, when we speak of the insignificance of human glory—of the nothingness of earthly grandeur—it is most instructive to point the proud spirit to the hour when all its greatness will be brought down to darkness and the worm. Then do we find a solemn monitor in graves and tombs. Let not man dream of immortality he, whose end is destruction—who will soon be given back to the earth—"ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

But when the object is to excite a shudder by presenting to the mind loathsome images of decay—by telling us our bodies shall be food for worms—it is a vulgar artifice, which can affect only the nervous and the timid. In death, thus viewed, there is nothing truly terrible.

Here is a confusion of ideas, which need to be separated. Men speak of the "cold grave." But what is cold or heat, where there is no sensation? What means the "dark and narrow tomb," if no eye is opened to discern the absence of light? Truly, it is no more dark than if the dead were laid as they are among some tribes of Indians—in the tops of trees. By thus analyzing our emotions, we find that insensibly we have associated the idea of consciousness with the body turning to corruption. The loneliness of the sepulchre is dreadful because we fancy that the mind is wakeful. We picture to ourselves the dead man rising up in his grave-clothes, and casting his cold eye around his dark and solitary cell. Therefore, we shudder to be buried, because we can not divest ourselves of a vague fear of being buried alive! Take away this and there is nothing more to dread. If life be departed, or dormant, then there is nothing more painful in the prospect that the body of a man should be left in the ground than the root of a tree. Indeed, one of our poets, in his Thanatopsis, has made pleasing the idea of thus "mingling with the elements."

Nay, if death be not merely a sleep for ages, but a sleep FOREVER, that is not the most dreadful thought which can weigh down the mind. Those who argue for the immortality of man from his desire of life, perhaps exaggerate his dread of annihilation. A celebrated preacher exclaims in a burst of powerful language: "O death! dark hour to hopeless unbelief! hour to which, in that creed of despair, no hour shall succeed! being's last hour! *to which even the shadows of avenging retribution were brightness and relief!*"

Such may be the natural instinct. But this love of existence is sadly changed by misery and by guilt. When life can but perpetuate bitter memories, the wretched rush from it,

"Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled,
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world."*

And not alone the desolate and broken-hearted. But those who have tried every pleasure of life, and exhausted them all, turn to death as a new excitement, and fondly dream of wandering as shades on "the black, Plutonian shore," inhaling "the freshness of the eternal night."

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* Hood's "Bridge of Sighs."

Even though their spirits pass through darkness into naught, they feel little horror of the change. Many a skeptic, and Epicurean looks forward to a final and utter cessation of existence with no trembling. Nay, it would seem as if he counted upon it as a last triumph to die without pain. He anticipates coolly the sensation of dying, and imagines himself falling into a soft slumber, as after a weary day—the senses gradually closing, and a feeling of repose stealing over him, delicious as the opium-eater's dream—and thus slowly sinking down into total unconsciousness—a rest which the hopes and fears of existence shall vex nevermore!

Strange that this "utter end," desired alike by misery and by wearied pleasure, should sometimes be demanded even by ambition.

A daring spirit, that has climbed to the summit of glory, feels a wild excitement in the prospect of bursting into the vacant heavens, leaving men to gaze after it in wonder. Danton—sentenced to the scaffold in the full vigor of life, exulted in this tragical end of his career:—"I shall soon be with annihilation; but my name will live in the Pantheon of history."

When Mirabeau was dying, the energies of his Herculean frame long struggled with the mortal disease. He had extorted a promise from his physician, that, when the agonies of death became excruciating, he would give him opium. Still the mighty heart beat on. He said that he felt a hundred years of life throbbing in him. At length he ceased to speak. Then his eye sought the physician, and seemed to implore the fatal draught. He took a pencil and traced one word, *dormir*. To sleep—sleep—*sleep*—was the last prayer of the dying tribune. He wished to sleep for an eternity!

It is not then the silence and forgetfulness of death that men fear most. To the "aching head" it is a welcome hope,

"To slumber in that dreamless bed
From all its toil."

But they fear that they shall not slumber. "To sleep—perchance to dream." It is the waking moments that they dread—when the tide of life flows back into the soul—when the dreaminess of departing is over, and they find themselves e, where they can no more sleep, nor die. Then will know, that if it was a fearful thing once to die—it is tely more terrible to live, without a possibility of death. en the gloomy expectation of Danton is disappointed. ition cannot soar so high as to pass the bounds of exist- .To misery God promises no *such* relief. Nor to the ed does he grant permission thus to escape forever. No ness of eternity covers them with its friendly gloom.

r are the good man's hopes destined to be lost in the ow of death. He is not born to die. When his soul de- out of the body, it does not sink into a dark cloud and pear. It mounts to a higher state.

therefore we look *beyond* death, it is still life—life for- —which alone is to be hoped or feared. It is not the tion of being, but its continuance, that appalls us. Not the body will decay—but that there is in man a princi- which resists decay. Not that we shall be soon dead and . But that in some other region our spirits will live.

necessity of life—this impossibility of annihilation, es deadly fear. And it is this which makes religion so nsely important, because that teaches us how to live. effect of moral action clings to us with the tenacity of It is not the immediate suffering which follows one g act which makes its commission so bitter. But one gression is the forerunner of a thousand. These airy ns of the will soon harden into habits. Evil passions too strong to be resisted. Therefore must they be ked in the beginning, and a firm principle of religion be nted. For a mind that has no sense of religious obliga and no principle of obedience, has lost the main element lf-control, and must go on to sin and inflict pain upon i.

ith such elements of misery infixed in the very being, more terrible prospect can be offered than simple ex- ce? Will it not be enough that the heart must beat on er, when every throb is agony?

me tell us that men are punished as they go along, and fore that they cannot be punished in a future world. I t the premise, but deny totally the conclusion. True, do suffer bitterly for their evil deeds in this life. But so rom that being an evidence that they will not suffer still fter, it is the strongest presumption of future misery. sin against God, and duty and conscience, is not like a offence, which is punished by imprisonment, and which laim no more when the term of the penalty expires. It is rather a poisoning of man's whole nature—a deadly venom, working in the blood and brain—and which must cause suffering as long as it remains in the system—even if that be forever! Because I see that every wrong act causes man either bodily or mental suffering, I am certain that when habits of wickedness have been confirmed by seventy years of sinful life, they must produce complete and uninterrupted misery.

Others, in despair, have sought refuge under the very threatenings of the Bible, and hoped that by eternal death God intended annihilation—that the wicked should be eternally dead. But no, life remains, whether the great hope of eternity be lost or won. The Scriptures assure us that a time will come when death shall be destroyed and for evermore unknown. But to the irreclaimably bad and lost, life will be no boon. They will long to die, and their supreme misery will be, that they cannot expire.

Here then I rest my argument for religion. It is not because you are to die, but because you live, and must live, and religion alone can save you from infinite misery here and hereafter.

I say not, you must be religious because life is short, and death is near. Alas! life may be very long—too long for your happiness. Death may be far distant. And before you reach that bourne, you may have to traverse years of suffering that shall seem like so many slow moving centuries. Therefore, do you need religion—not for a dying hour—but here—and now. Take to your bosom that celestial Comforter. It will mitigate every human sorrow. It will break the force of those inevitable calamities which must fall even upon prosperous life, so that they shall not crush you. It will revive your courage and hope. It will keep you from being your own worst enemy, and destroying yourself by madness and by crime. It will save you from endless folly and wretchedness. It will avert from you hours of weeping and of remorse. It will prepare you both to live and to

Yes—to die! For I mean not that your minds should be barred against all thought of death. Only that it be not clothed with false and unreal terrors; and thus made an object of unmanly fear. Bodily dissolution is a matter neither of hope or dread. What is it but to cease to breathe, and to turn into dust!

I look into the caverns of Death, and find nothing there half so wonderful or terrible as I meet in the broad light of day. Men speak of the awful mystery and solemnity of death. Would that they might ponder the more awful mystery of life. This fact of a vital existence is the great wonder of creation. The highest act of God was not the moulding of external forms, but the inspiration of an independent life. We can imagine how the cold clay should be fashioned into the grace of a statue. But how life should enter into dead bodies—this is Nature's miracle. "God breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul."

To live! What is it? It is to think, to feel, to suffer, to enjoy. Whatever of good or ill man can experience, is concentrated in that one word—Life. This is the most intense word in human language. So that when the Scriptures describe the completion of glory and blessedness, they speak of the heavenly state, not as everlasting happiness, but as everlasting life. Life, then, is the chief interest of man, and death itself becomes important only as introducing another life, which is endless.

This is the true light in which to look upon death—not as the enemy of life, and its destroyer—but as its new creator—as a further development of the vital power, by which the soul, casting off its cumbrous clay, is born into immortality. As such, we would not relinquish the hope of death. It is a transformation too great—too magnificent—not to be welcomed as our supreme felicity. Life is no longer weighed down by a dark and dreadful fear. The heart is not oppressed and stifled by a dreary feeling of decay. To the last moment the pulse beats firm and high. As death approaches it throbs quicker with expectation. Life rides exulting and triumphant over every obstacle. It spans the arch of death, and urges its way upward for ever. Glorious Death! Thou art not the end of life, but its fresh beginning. Eagerly we look for the moment when God's silent angel shall open the doors of eternity! We love to meditate that coming day, and—while we rejoice in all the good of this passing life—shall often turn aside to

> "Walk thoughtful on the solemn, silent shore
> Of that vast ocean we must sail so soon."

SERMON DCI.

BY REV. ELBERT S. PORTER,

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"AND THE BOOKS WERE OPENED."

"And the books were opened; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the book, according to their works."—Rev. xx. 12.

The present bears a most intimate relation to the future. And whether we believe it or not, there is a record of all our past which will hereafter be opened before us, and according to its registrations our eternal destiny will be fixed. The thought of to-day will meet us again; and the deed which was done in presence of few if any witnesses, will be read out before the audience of an assembled universe. So revelation teaches; so we believe. But there are many who think the threatened judgment a priestly device or ghostly bugbear, and in no wise to be feared. Scoffers ridicule the idea, and men of mere worldly views, if they think at all concerning the matter, are quite too ready to indulge the hope, that either the judgment tribunal will not be set, or if set, will not possess those tremendous adjuncts of justice and holiness, which the Sacred Oracles ascribe to it. And even within the pale of the church, there is an appalling amount of mere speculation respecting the great day of the Lord. And being little, if anything, more than mere speculation, the doctrine of eternal judgment does not exert that practical control over the life, which a doctrine of so intrinsic an importance ought most surely to exert upon us all. To revivify our decaying impressions, quicken our faith, and deeply impress us with a conviction of the certainty of the coming scene in which we shall all share a glad or sorrowful part, will be the object of the present discourse. We proceed to inquire what are the books which will be opened.

I. The book of the material universe will be opened.

The connection between mind and matter is most intimate—and the most meagre attainments in the merest elements and rudiments of science familiarize us with the fact, that mind is the controlling and plastic power which rules over and impresses matter to a wonderful extent. It is indeed the boast of modern achievement, that spirit, by its inventive skill has subdued nature, and rendered the elements of matter subservient to its purposes. And while this is a thing of common and open notoriety, there are relationships between mind and matter of a nature far more astounding, than all those included within the ordinary range of scientific and mechanic art. There are relationships and points of contact between the thinking soul and the world of matter, which, instead of flattering our pride of intellect, may well awe our hearts and fill us with holy fear. We say only, what the best teachers of natural science declare, when we aver that the outward world is a depository of the moral doings of each accountable man. Nature is the great ledger, on whose sheets a recording angel traces a record of our every thought and act. The air we breathe, the light which enwraps us, and the dull clod we press in the daily rounds of our business, are so many scribes, taking note of all our movements, and recording all our works. The heavens which surround us are the parchment scroll on which God's telegraphic agencies are ever tracing the symbolic characters that delineate our lives. This is not fancy, but the demonstrative testimony of the most exact and rigid science. In proof we advert to a few samiliar illustrations.

We are accustomed to speak of matter as dead, inert, unfeeling. But the fact is, it is ever in motion, and always impressible. Every particle entering into the composition of the material world, is so nicely adjusted to every other particle, as to preserve its balance, while it ceaselessly vibrates. And while thus vibrating, every kind of matter, the granite rock as well as the yielding clay, are all busy in receiving impressions, just as wax takes and retains the image stamped upon it. Thus all the pages of nature are adapted to receive the image of our words and works.

From this general, to proceed to more specific, illustrations. Take the atmosphere. This is a fluid ocean, raising it waves and its ripples, similar to those which are visible on an ocean of waters. When you cast a stone into a sea or a lake, you set in motion a series of concentric circles, which recede farther and farther from the place of disturbance, until they finally become invisible. But, if when the naked eye loses the power of tracing them, it were assisted by a powerful magnifying glass, they would still be discerned rolling on. And if when the eye and the glass together should fail to follow them, recourse should be had to the searching analysis of mathematical investigation, it would be found that beyond a peradventure, they still continued to widen and widen, coming in contact with other circles, originating from other centres, modified by them, and modifying them in return; yet never losing their motion, but entering into the permanent movements, and forces which fill up the universe. This is indeed a mystery, but no less a fact; and none but the illiterate or the sciolist will deny it. As this is true of impressions made on water, so also is it of impressions made on air. Our words, which are the outward flows of invisible thought, and every act, set in motion a series of waves, just as surely as do the vibrations of a bell when struck; and these waves enter into the permanent movements of the atmosphere; and are all preserved there and will be preserved until the heavens shall flee away. It argues nothing against this fact, that these waves become invisible or inaudible to us—for our perceptions are not the limits of material existence. If it be objected that the impressions produced upon the atmosphere may become infinitely minute, I answer that this minuteness will be no hindrance to their being read by Him, whose infinity embraces the minute as well as the vast.

In like manner we might go on to show that the unfeeling earth preserve, amid all the vibrations of its countless atoms, the record of human action. So that the lonely spot where the murderer dashed down his victim—the darkened cave, where persecution tracked his martyr, and the dungeon's wall where suffering virtue bowed the head in agony—are as so many memorial-stones, whereon man's acts are engraven, as with the pen of a diamond; and there is no deed of man, whether done in the day or in the night, of which the insensible particles of earth are not the witnesses and the recording angels.

To confirm these illustrations and establish the general fact, we may avail ourselves of the aid which the nature and properties of light afford, in proof of a natural record of human transactions. I need not tell you that there is a light-bearing ether—a luminous fluid—diffused through all space and penetrating all bodies, however dense. The sun and the stars, singly, do not produce light. This is generated by the chemical and electrical power of the heavenly bodies, working upon, and in connection with, this light-bearing ether. The sun puts in motion this fluid, so that light comes to us in waves. Now, if the sun be regarded as one, and the earth as another shore of an ocean, one hundred and ninety-five millions of miles across, then the wave on the opposite shore must impel a succession of waves, infinitely minute, through all the intervening space, until the last wave reaches the eye of the observer. The rapidity of these undulations or waves is so great, that only eight minutes of time are required for the delivery of an impression, made at the distance of 195,000,000 miles, to the eye of a spectator on our earth. Two august and imposing facts here meet us and compel our attention. Here is a medium of transmission as widely diffused as the universe; all impressions made on it are conveyed with a rapidity inconceivable. And this everywhere present ether becomes the means of daguerreotyping the forms of human transactions upon the tablets of nature. This earth may be regarded as a mighty cylindrical press with men for its types, and whose every revolution impresses upon the broad sheets of light that envelope it, the nature and character of each day's doings—as every man's work—yea, printing all upon a sheet which may be read almost instantaneously in the remotest regions of space. There is another thought in connection with this, which we ought not to omit.

It is known that a message forwarded by telegraph from New York to New Orleans, would, if the point of connection were formed, travel in about the same space of time from New York to Pekin—and will you tell me wherein the rapidity of electrical transmission on Morse's telegraph differs from the rate of transmission on God's telegraph? For the light which surrounds us is a divine telegraph, along whose lines the report of all our works is carried with a celerity surpassing thought. The work I do in secret, therefore, is published, as soon as done, in far off worlds. He who created the light reads its report; and may not spirits, good and bad, do the same?

Startling thought! that nature is everywhere present, witness and reporter of our works—that the spirits above and the spirits beneath are summoned to take knowledge of us! There is indeed "nothing hid which shall not be made manifest." When the day shall blaze for the revelation of all our doings, earth, air and sky shall disclose all that we have written and graven upon them—whether of word or deed—virtuous or vicious. This is to me a thought of the soberest and weightiest practical moment. It is a grand and imposing aspect which nature presents in her ceaseless activity. When we consider how busy are all her elements—how air, earth and sky are working in wondrous combination—that all are taking signs and impressions that will never be erased until the great day, it may well admonish us to beware indulging the hope that anything can be said or done beyond the observation of witnesses ever with us.

Lest some may set all this down to the score of fancy, I ask these plain questions. Does not the geologist read on the rocks and in the fossils of bygone centuries the record of events which occurred long ere Adam breathed the breath of paradise? Are there not now vibrations on the surface of the earth which sometimes startle whole communities? Does not the breeze carry on its wings tidings of things done far away from the reach of our vision? Is not light a swift-winged messenger to bear to us report of occurrences in far distant regions of space? And if all nature is thus occupied in bringing intelligence to us, is it fancy and not rather the demonstration of experience as well as of science, that nature is also occupied in bearing intelligence of us—that her every whisper, however faint, and her every sign, however obscure, can be read by Him who holds the universe in his hand, and counteth the number of its atoms, is what we dare not doubt, if we believe in a God of infinite knowledge. It was therefore no flourish of rhetoric, when the inspired Isaiah appealed to the heavens and the earth to bear testimony to the sins of Israel.

Let not the sinner think that his sins will be buried in oblivion. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him who, as well a thousand years hence, as at this moment, can read on the broad pages of the visible universe, the inscriptions graven there by our works and our words.

II. The book of Human Consciousness will be opened.

The human soul is only a laboratory of thought—it is also a great storehouse, wherein are deposited its thoughts, emotions and volitions. Without material locks or bars it has a power of retention that far surpasses our conception. It is the inspector of its own contents—the inquisitor of its own state. This is indeed what we understand by consciousness—the knowledge of our own mental sensations and operations—the internal perception of self. Consciousness takes knowledge of what is constantly passing within, and memory stores up these impressions for the future. Memory is the broad page on which consciousness is ever writing the narrative of a soul's daily and hourly history. And this self-observing faculty of the mind acts as the guardian and interpreter of the memory. In our eager pursuit of pleasure or wealth, we try to forget the past, yet often before our astonished vision, sins perhaps long committed, start up as fresh as though of yesterday.

No faculty of soul is more certain in its action, than this power of perpetuating and retaining the past. Much we forget, and often regret that our memories are feeble , and our knowledge of past events dimmed. Yet vivid realizations of the past are greatly hindered by our want of effort, and by our endeavors to erase the inscriptions of past feelings and events. Yet slight causes will "bring back on the heart the weight which it would fling aside forever." And contrary to our wishes the dead past stands up before us .This power of recollection and involuntary consciousness is a matter of each man's experience.

There are times when memory seems roused to an unwonted energy—when consciousness, like the lightning's flash on a dark night, illumines with a most intense vividness the whole field of our moral history. The chambers of imagery, long veiled, are suddenly opened. Old thoughts and old schemes are brought glaringly to view. Many now before me can attest the truth of this. The standing by a death couch, or the look into an open grave, or the hearing of a sermon from a faithful pastor, or a calm reproof from the lips of a parent—yea, even the rustling of a dead and withered leaf, may have been the means of recalling reflections and emotions long faded from recollection. Numerous are the well authenticated records of dying hours in which the believing and the impenitent have found themselves confronted with scenes and mental acts that had long been forgotten. Death, like a mighty magician, brings these together and arrays them with terrible distinctness before the quickened senses of the departing spirit.

And why should we doubt that when the clog and clod of sense are dropped, that this consciousness of self will be vastly intensified. Little as we know of the world on the other side death, yet of this, reason and revelation both assure us—that there "we shall know even as we are known."

There, the book of self will be opened. Partly through the craft of Satan, and partly on account of our own wilful obstinacy, self is now little understood, because little studied; or if studied, the work is conducted in such a spirit that we too often rise from our investigations, complacently self-deceived. But when the archangel's trump shall sound, each individual, instead of viewing, as now, the faults and crimes of others, will be summoned to contemplate "all that his thinking soul hath thought, for glory or for shame."

III. The book of Divine Remembrance will be opened.

Though nature fail, and consciousness be infirm, there is a being whose knowledge is infinite—by whom actions are weighed. Should creation's records be dimmed or effaced, there is, nevertheless, a record everlastingly vivid and immutably true—His mind—to whom the darkness and the light are alike; who penetrates every disguise; who beholds at once the entireness of his universe, as also the parts which compose it.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for our comprehension.

"Thou God seest me," said one of old whose soul was deeply impressed with a sense of the divine presence! And he uttered a truth no less awful than it is certain.

We shrink from publicity when we would plan or act contrary to conscience. We desire not the presence of human witnesses to our guilt, either in thought or action. Crime courts concealment. Sin shuns the light of day. When the wicked act is done, the sinner endeavors to quiet his conscience, by the flattering unction that no man knoweth it. But in all these calculations of concealment one fact is overlooked and forgotten, viz: there is an ever-present, an all-beholding spirit—an eye whose lightening glance penetrates every concealment—which discerns all the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The divine knowledge never faileth. To the memory of the infinite, the unchangeable God, their pertaineth no imperfection. All the acts of our intelligent being are treasured up in his recollection. The plans, thoughts, words, acts of our whole life—all that has entered into the composition of our moral history—however much may have escaped our memory—all is deposited in the treasury of God's knowledge. "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings." "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord." "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Every thing relating to our individual characters will be brought to light. "For the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Aye, even the "counsels of the hearts."

THE EVERLASTING REST.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."—HEB. ix. 4.

Heaven is never presented to our view as a state of conflict. Having passed through his period of trial, the Christian will enter the world of holiness and bliss, never again to be subjected to the loss of his peace. Secured from falling, by an Almighty arm, there is no danger that he will ever apostatize. He will love and serve God in full accordance with his capacities; and he will evermore be surrounded by beings of the same character with himself. There will be no sinful propensities in his soul, struggling for the mastery, no consciousness of transgression; no painful regret for past errors; nothing of this nature to interrupt and destroy his peace. All the woes incident to our fallen, sinful nature will be excluded from the heavenly rest. The fear of poverty will not disquiet the mind, nor that of want, oppress; the jealousies and envies of earth will there be unknown; nor can we think of any evil to which we are here subject, from which the Christian will not there be free; and, with his holiness, his bliss will then be perfect.

The employments of heaven will be such as to increase and perfect his joy. We reason from the nature of the mind, and its capacity for the acquisition of knowledge, that in heaven it will still be active; and it will make the study of the works of God a chief employment, and be engaged with the angels, in all that conduces to the divine glory and its own happiness. Here, the body occupies a large proportion of care. But in the future state, all its wants will be provided for, so that our whole time may be actively devoted to serving God, in such rational and pleasurable pursuits as may conduce to his glory and our good.

The ideas common on this subject are strangely wrong, contradicting everything that we know of the nature of celestial felicity and glory. It is not in idleness that the saints are to spend eternity. There must, and will be something for them to do, which will call into activity their holy and benevolent affections, or else heaven would soon become a dull place to them. Nor can we doubt that, in this respect, there is ample provision made. Heavenly happiness is represented by symbols drawn from material objects of beauty and grandeur. We are not to suppose that heaven presents to view a beautiful garden filled with choice fruit or a chrystal stream, or a city paved with gold; nor that there are in heaven harps of gold, and crowns and raiment pure and white; nor that our Father has a house there, and tables spread for the hungry, for these are only emblems, and are used to convey the idea of happiness to minds otherwise incapable of its conception. We should not, therefore, materialize heaven, but use these scriptural metaphors to heighten our ideas of its bliss.

There will be both pleasant and useful occupation in which the saints will be engaged. It is needless, however, to speculate, where the facts have not been revealed. And yet it is pleasant to think that there are innumerable ways of occupying ourselves in heaven. There is much yet to be learned of God, and of his works. Here, we gain only the rudiments of knowledge. Even Newton, at the close of life, could say that he appeared to himself to have been like a little boy upon the sea shore, picking up a smoother pebble and a prettier shell than ordinary, while the vast ocean of truth lay unexplored before him.

When we reflect that the whole of the boundless creation will in heaven be spread out to our view, that suns and systems of worlds will rise upon the astonished vision, and that new works of creation, new forms of matter, and fresh creations of mind, may occupy us with a view of Jehovah's wisdom forever, we may feel assured that, to follow in the path which he thus opens before us, will give us enough to do, and even inspire us with fresh motives to adoration and praise.

Social friendship will there be enjoyed and perpetuated. Much of the pleasure of life is that derived from social intercourse. But, in heaven, this communion will be purely spiritual. As kindred minds naturally take pleasure in each other's society, so will it be in the everlasting rest. That the saints in heaven will there recognize their friends, does not admit of a doubt. There we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. It greatly enhances the pleasure of anticipation to reflect that the friendships begun on earth may be transferred to heaven, and there be perpetuated. No thought suggested in view of friends who sleep in Jesus, is more consoling. We know that they will be happy, and that abiding faithful, we shall join them in that kingdom of our Father. There is nothing which so effectually removes the sting of death, or imparts such consolation to the bereaved, as the thought that those who knew and loved on earth, and who have gone before us, may be deputed, by our Saviour, as ministering spirits, to convoy us home: so that, on dying, our eyes may be open, in eternity, on the friends who surround our dying bed, waiting to receive and welcome us to glory.

Does the parent rejoice in the return of a wandering son? How much higher and holier the joy of that Parent in heaven, to meet his beloved child there, well knowing that every danger is now past, and that everlasting blessedness is, through sovereign grace, secured? The spirits of our friends in heaven are, as the angels of God, enjoying the same interest in each other, and ever susceptible to the same holy friendships. When it is reflected how greatly the happiness of life depends on such pleasant associations, can we doubt that the pleasures derived from this source are, in heaven, infinitely enhanced? Not only those we knew and loved on earth, but holy persons of past ages, will share our love. Beings of a higher grade will constitute part of the celestial society. The saints will mingle with the angels, partake of their knowledge, listen to their wisdom, and rejoice in their love.

But above all, the saints will there hold converse with God, and enjoy the blessedness resulting from communion and intercourse with the Redeemer. They will feel a conscious joy in the thought, that the great and good Father, who sits upon the throne of the universe, is their friend.

What can equal such society, or confer such happiness? Freindships so exalted and glorious, formed on such a basis, and cemented by such relationships, will furnish everything needed to make us happy.

And the happiness thus created for the blessed will never terminate. The saints will have found the everlasting rest. Earth presents to view no such blessedness. In comparison with this, all its pleasures are trivial; its joys are transitory—here to-day—to-morrow gone. Its friendships are often withered in an hour. All the pleasures that spring from earth bear the stamp of their earthly origin. But the rest of the saints is a state of blissful employment, and social intercourse and friendship, pure, spiritual, and eternal.

And this rest is as glorious as it is enduring. Heaven is a bright, a glorious place. It is pictured forth to view by the emblem of the golden city, adorned with precious stones, and illumined by God himself, whose glories are resplendent, and whose brightness casts the orb of light into the shade. While the world of the lost is described as darkness, heaven is set forth to view in all its splendors, as a place worthy to be the residence of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Language fails to express the thoughts which cluster around that happy place, or to convey any suitable idea of that holy and blest abode. Nor can any mind but one renewed, and which knows by experience the blessedness of a life of peace, form a proper conception of the beauty and holiness of the everlasting rest.

To this rest, the way of peace conducts all who love God. This is heaven ; its portals are just beyond the river of death. He who walks in the way of peace till he reaches that river, will pass over it unharmed. He has the sure promise of God, " when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." and of all who have pursued this way, none have ever found God unfaithful to his promise. For it is written, for the encouragement of all that love him, that, " though the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, yet my kindness shall not depart from thee, nor the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.—"*The Way of Peace.*"

THE DOMESTIC ALTAR.

It is something to bring the members of a family together twice a day. For, " in proportion as the subjects of mutual obligation live apart, they will cease to care for one another. No customs of society are laudable or safe which tend, in any considerable degree, to separate parents from children and brothers from sisters." All such customs go to weaken that sense of mutual dependence, which is commingled, as a vital element, with the domestic affections. Love must be on the wane in any house, the inmates of which rarely meet together. But in the case we are contemplating, they are not merely convened morning and evening to look each other in the face, or to hold a familiar talk. They assemble to engage in one of the most tender and impressive of all services—to listen as a family, to the counsels of inspired wisdom ; to sing in unison their hymns of praise, and bow down together before the throne of grace, and follow the hallowed accents of a father's voice, while he presents, as the revered priest of his household, their common confessions, supplications, thanksgivings, and intercessions. Can you wonder that a service like this should have enkindled the enthusiasm of one of the sweetest poets,* who, though his own worst enemy, could never forget the daily worship of his father's house ?

Is it possible to conceive of a service better adapted than this to repress all jealousies and envies, to drive away the gloomy vapors of moroseness, to restore serenity to every clouded brow, to reburnish the chain of affection, and diffuse an air of cheerfulness through the house ? If there is a transient interruption of congugal cordiality, can the coolness survive the family-prayer? If there are heart-burnings among the children, will they not dissolve like snow in the sun as the petition goes up, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" If misfortune has come down upon them, will they not cling more closely to each other as they pour their common sorrows into the ear of their common Father? If they are enriched with unlooked-for blessings, will they not feel them to be the more precious as they present their united thank-offering to the Giver of all good

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*Burns.

But I must not detain you with this animating theme. Let me rather invite you to prove for yourselves the efficacy of family worship as a help to domestic happiness Let it be your first care to rear an altar to God if your house is without one—to repair your altar if it has fallen into decay.

And by this and every other means which God has placed within your reach, strive to prepare yourselves and those who are dearest to you, for a better world. Give the BIBLE the place in your families to which it is entitled, and then, through the unsearchable riches of Christ, many a household among you may hereafter realize that most blessed consummation, and appear A WHOLE FAMILY IN HEAVEN.—*The Bible in the Family.*

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SERMON DCII.

BY REV. WM. S. PLUMER, D.D.,

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THE INCOMPREHENSIBILITY OF GOD.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—Job xi. 7—9.

THE nature of God is the foundation of all true religion, and the will of God is the rule of all acceptable worship. Therefore the knowledge of God is of the greatest importance. Without it the people perish. Total ignorance here is total ruin. But to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is eternal life. To see and acknowledge God in all our ways is an essential part of genuine piety. To fail in so doing is no small part of human wickedness. Our thoughts cannot be too much turned to Him, who is in all, and through all, and above all, and over all, God blessed for ever.

Nor is the mysteriousness of the divine nature and government any reason why we should not seek to know what may be known concerning them. To the carnal and unbelieving the darkness around the nature and ways of God is an occasion of stumbling; but to those who are taught from above it brings pious confidence, deep humility, and adoring reverence. Give one the spirit of adoption and self-renunciation, and he cannot be frightened from the presence of his Maker either by the lustre or the darkness round about his throne. Sages have explored this subject till wisdom fell asleep over her lesson and pride rose up and uttered great swelling words of vanity and blasphemy; but the humble child of God, thirsting for divine knowledge and sitting at the feat of Jesus, has learned more than the ancients, and has become wise unto salvation.

The doctrine of the text and of this discourse is that THERE IS IN THE NATURE AND WAYS OF GOD MUCH THAT IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO US. In dwelling on this truth it may be stated:

I. That it is agreed on all hands that the adorable first person of the Trinity, the Father, is, and must ever be, beyond the grasp of our senses and faculties. He is the King eternal, immortal and *invisible.* No man hath seen God at any time. No man can see his face and live. He maketh darkness his pavilions round about him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

It is no less generally agreed that the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, is, and ever will be, beyond the direct and immediate notice of all creatures. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." He broods over the face of nature; garnishes the heavens; converts the soul; opens our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of God's word; sanctifies our affections; fills the saints with joy; fits God's people for glory; divides his gifts severally as He will, and yet "we know not the way of the Spirit." We never saw him, and we never shall see him as disembodied spirits see each other. We may know him by his word and works, by his enlightening, sanctifying, and comforting influences, but never by sight. He is far beyond the grasp of both our bodily and mental faculties.

The brightest manifestation of the Godhead ever yet made, or ever to be made, is in the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity. We may behold his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; but we can go no further. This manifestation is for all practical purposes sufficient. It is clear and glorious, yet not intolerable by reason of excessive brightness. Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He thus taught us that the best possible discovery we could make of the Godhead was through the veil of his own flesh. But even in Christ divinity shone forth under great obscuration. The transfiguration, the ascension in a bright cloud, the appearance to Saul of Tarsus after his ascension, and the glory in which John, the divine, saw him, may give us some faint conception of the effulgence of his everlasting person. But we know him chiefly by his works, and teachings, and sufferings. Thousands saw him with their bodily eyes, and knew no more of God than before. So that we may safely say that God is, and for ever shall be, wholly unperceivable by any of our senses or faculties. If any object that it is promised that the pure in heart "shall see God," the answer is that all God's word shall be fulfilled; but the meaning of that language evidently is, not that they shall meet God face to face and behold his unveiled divinity, but that they shall enjoy God as revealed in his word, and works, and ordinances, in the person of his Son, and by the influences of his Spirit. Now whatever eludes all our senses and faculties is to us necessarily clad with mysteriousness. Whatever is concealed from every perceptive power excludes the possibility of original knowledge. In such a case, learning without instruction is impossible. The difficulty is heightened by every step we take towards that which is in its nature boundless. But when our thoughts go out after Him, who is absolutely infinite, we are soon enveloped in a profound obscurity, which no created faculties can penetrate.

II. The incomprehensibility of God's nature and ways is often asserted in his word. To cite all the texts pertinent to the proof would be tedious. Take a short selection of them. The book of Job is probably the oldest inspired record. In it we find these words: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea:" "God doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number:" "He is wise in heart and mighty in strength. * * He doeth great things past finding out, yea, and wonders without number." "Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him:" "God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive with him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters:" "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. * * With God is terrible majesty. Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out: he is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice. * * He respecteth not any that are wise in heart." "Behold God is great, and we know him not:" "God thundereth marvellously with his voice: great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend." The same doctrine is taught by Moses in the Pentateuch, "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God:" by David, "Thy judgments are a great deep:" "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable:" by Asaph, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known:" by a later Psalmist, "Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite:" by Solomon, "No man can find out the work that God doeth from the beginning to the end:" "Thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all:" "The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee:" "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing:" by Isaiah, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour:" "There is no searching of his understanding:" by Jeremiah, "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word?" by Jesus Christ, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the

Son will reveal him;" "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me:" by Paul, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God:" "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" and by John, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

Here are the words of Moses, who wrote the oldest books of inspiration, and of other men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, down to the last surviving apostle, whose writings closed the canon of Scripture. The doctrine of the Old and New Testaments, of the prophets, of Jesus Christ, and of his apostles on this subject, is precisely the same. The coming of Christ did not remove the mysteriousness of Jehovah's nature and ways, but rather established it. By opening to our vision amazing fields of thought respecting God's love in Christ, it gave us new and everlasting themes of adoring wonder. God manifest in the flesh was, and is, and ever shall be, itself the sublimest of all mysteries. "Nothing but itself is its parallel." And no where is the incomprehensibility of God spoken of in Scripture as cause of sorrow to the pious. On the contrary, inspired men exult in it and give thanks. Nor can the doctrine be either alarming or distressing to one, whose hope is set on high, and whose mind has learned to bow in true humility before the majesty of God. It is also clear from one of the texts quoted from Paul, that our inability to find out the Almighty to perfection is not merely moral, but natural. The same would have been true if man had never sinned at all. The same shall still be true when the heavens shall be no more, The passage quoted from John is part of a song sung in heaven. This proves that even heavenly bliss does not require in order to its perfection the understanding of all God's nature and ways. A part of celestial happiness consists in worshipping Him, whose counsels are of old, faithfulness and truth, and who maketh darkness his secret place.

III. So very wonderful are the perfections of God, compared with the attributes of the most exalted creature, that his nature and ways must always be mysterious just in proportion to our knowledge of their extent. God is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. All men and angels are finite, the creatures of yesterday, liable to change, and of themselves—without God—have neither wisdom nor virtue. Man is the very lowest order of rational beings, and has by sin greatly debased himself. He is blinded by many passions and prejudices. "Every man is brutish in his knowledge." How then should man, as compared with God, have knowledge either extensive or accurate? This is no surprising thing. Our elder and nobler brethren, the elect angels, who have, ever since they were created, stood around the throne of the Eternal, and drunk of the river of truth as it flows forth fresh from its fountain, are yet, as compared with God, foolish and ignorant. "He chargeth his angels with folly." "Though glorious and holy creatures, they are fallible and mutable, except as upheld and confirmed by the Lord. They execute his wise and righteous counsels; but would soon show their want of wisdom, if trusted to manage any part of the government of the world, according to their own mind. Nay, compared with the infinite knowledge and wisdom of God, they are chargeable with ignorance, being utterly unable to comprehend the vast designs of the great Creator and Lord of the universe; except as he pleases to unfold them. How much less then may man be trusted!" God's plans embrace all creatures and all worlds. They comprehend the whole universe. The greatest stretch of the human mind never extended to all the affairs of an empire, a province, a city, a family, or even of a person. God's plans are founded on the most perfect knowledge of all things. Man's information is very imperfect both in scope and in degree. It would be marvellous if a little child should understand all the measures of a wise ruler. Yet that would be but one finite being comprehending the measures of another. But for a creature to know God's plans would be for finite to grasp infinite. Until man can hold the sea in the hollow of his hand, measure the azure vault of heaven with a carpenter's rule, sweep the outskirts of creation with a compass of his own construction, and tell all worlds, and give their number, weight, and measure, let not his arrogance swell to the monstrous bloating of imagining that he can comprehend God. If he does not know all things formed, how can he search out him that formed them?

Man may follow Methuselah through his long career, but at last he dies. Man may compute the number of seconds in a myriad of millions of centuries, but that is not eternity. God's life-time has neither beginning nor end. "The number of his years cannot be searched out." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." A late writer says: "While the spirituality of God's nature places Him beyond the reach of our direct cognizance, there are certain other essential properties of his nature, which place Him beyond the reach of our possible comprehension. Let me instance the past eternity of the Godhead. One might figure a futurity that never ceases to flow, and which has no termination, but who can climb his ascending way among the obscurities of that infinite which is behind him? Who can travel in thought along the track of generations gone by till he has overtaken the Eternity, which lies in that direction? Who can look across the millions of ages which have elapsed, and from an ulterior post of observation look again to another and another succession of centuries; and at each further extremity in this series of retrospects, stretch backward his regards on an antiquity as remote and indefinite as ever? Could we by any number of successive strides over these mighty intervals, at length reach the fountain-head of duration, our spirits might be at rest. But to think of duration as having no fountain-head; to think of time with no beginning; to uplift the imagination along the heights of an antiquity, which has positively no summit; to soar these upward steeps till, dizzied by the altitude, we can keep no longer on the wing; for the mind to make these repeated flights from one pinnacle to another; and, instead of scaling the mysterious elevation, to lie baffled at its feet, or lose itself among the far, the long withdrawing recesses of that primeval distance, which at length merges away into a fathomless unknown, this is an exercise utterly discomfiting to the puny faculties of man. We are called on to stir ourselves up that we may take hold of God, but the clouds and darkness, which are round about him, seem to repel the enterprise as hopeless, and man, as if overborne by a sense of littleness, feels as if nothing can be done but to make prostrate obeisance of all his faculties before him." If man cannot compute the lifetime of God, how can he comprehend his plans? If he cannot take the dimensions of that Eternity, which is Jehovah's habitation, how can he search out Him who dwelleth therein? "An eternity past puzzles all human comprehension." Yet an eternity to come, if duly considered, no less completely eludes our grasp. It is an important truth that "though we cannot comprehend eternity, yet we can comprehend that there is an eternity." At this plain truth we must stop.

Think, too, of God's omnipresence. He is everywhere. He fills immensity. He is a spirit, and so cannot be divided; yet he is always present in every part of the universe with the whole of his being and nature. He is an infinite spirit, and so no limits can bound him. "He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being." "He is a very present help in time of trouble." "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? * * Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" "Whither shall I go from [illegible] whither shall I flee from thy presence? If [illegible] ven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." The sun is distant from the earth *ninety-five millions* of miles; but *ninety-five millions* of times *ninety-five millions* of miles beyond the sun, and in every other direction, God is as truly present as in heaven itself. Light travels at the rate of more than *one hundred and ninety-two thousand* miles every second; yet there are stars so distant that if a ray of light had left them on the morning that the Israelites went out of Egypt, it would not yet have reached our world. Over the vast blazing universe above us and around us Jehovah presides. There may be points, beyond which there are no inhabited worlds, yet who dare assert even that? But space has no limits. Immensity has no walls, outside of which non-entity has her kingdom. "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?" The other natural perfections of God are no less admirable and incomprehensible than those already noticed.

But the moral character of God presents, if possible, still greater wonders. At the close of a long and lucid argument respecting it, even blessed Paul could do no more than say, "O the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Jesus Christ, when on earth, was actuated by very similar sentiments. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Now, if the contemplation of God's moral character produced such exclamations from the man Christ Jesus, and from his servant Paul, it must be a theme of the most exalted nature. It is while speaking of his own moral character, and especially of his amazing mercy, that God says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The same remark is as true of God's holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and faithfulness. Indeed, all God's moral character is presented to our admiration, in the person and work of Jesus Christ, in such a glorious manner, as to have filled heaven and earth with joy ever since the plan of redemption was known. The angels have long desired to look into these things. The regenerate on earth are delighted with them, and the redeemed in glory celebrate them for ever and ever. God's love is as unfathomable as his understanding. Nothing is more unsearchable than the riches of Christ. None but divinity can comprehend them. There is often a pleasing harmony in music. There is always an admirable harmony in the plans and works of God. But the most delightful and wonderful harmony is that of the divine attributes in man's salvation. Inflexible justice and incomparable mercy, terrible severity and infinite goodness, eternal truth and everlasting kindness, spotless holiness and undying faithfulness, all meet around the cross of Christ, and kiss and embrace each other. No such glorious concord is seen elsewhere but in Jehovah himself.

IV. God has shown himself to be incomprehensible in his works of creation. He doubtless might have made more worlds and more orders of being than he has; yet who knows all the works that God has made? There are known to be more than *eight thousand* species of the beetle alone. The tribes of creatures in our world, which are invisible to the naked eye, are said to be far more numerous than all those which we can see. If the tribes are more numerous, the individuals are probably as hundreds of millions to one. There are supposed to be perceptible by powerful glasses as many as *three* or *four hundred millions* of fixed stars. If each of these is a sun and the centre of a system of worlds like our own, how vast is the universe! It consists of matter organized and unorganized, and of spirit mortal and immortal. The Bible does not deny that brutes have something in their nature which may be called spirit. But then it teacheth that the spirit of a beast goeth downward to the earth, and the spirit of man goeth upward. At death it returns to God, who gave it. All these organisms, animate and inanimate, and all these spirits, mortal and immortal, were called out of non-entity by the Almighty. It is impossible to conceive of any exertion of power greater than that, by which something is made out of nothing. Yet out of nothing God made all things, our bodies and our souls, all we are, all we see, all that is within us, above us, beneath us, around us. Nor did any part of the work of creation cost him any labor. "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." "He bindeth up the water in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them." "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof." Nothing is too hard for him. He neither groweth faint nor is weary.

Indeed so inscrutable is God in all his ways that perhaps no heathen ever spoke so wisely concerning the divine nature as Simonides, who being asked by Hiero, "What is God?" demanded one day for deliberation. When again asked the same question, he desired two days. As often as the question was repeated he doubled the time. When asked the reason of his conduct, he replied, "The longer I consider the question, the greater is the darkness in which I am enveloped." Most of our knowledge of

God is *negative.* Our *positive* knowledge of him is very limited. Each of his perfections may well be a study for life. We shall never rise to the full elevation of this theme, neither in this life nor in that which is to come. There will ever be topless heights of divine knowledge, to which we will look up with inquiring awe.

V. In God's government and providence are several things which must ever make them incomprehensible to us. How noiseless are most of his doings. When in spring Jehovah would reanimate all nature, bring into activity myriads of insects, give growth to millions of seeds, and clothe mountains and valleys in living green, it is all a silent work. When he would subvert a universal monarchy, long before the time set for that purpose, he puts it into the heart of a great ruler to build a bridge, and for that purpose to change the channel of a river for a season. This is all done without signs in heaven, or war in the elements. In the fulness of time the same river is, by means the simplest, diverted from its channel, Belshazzar is slain, Babylon is a prey to the invader, and a universal empire is dissolved. Commonly when God depopulates cities and kingdoms, his messengers pass silently along, and do their work ere men are aware. There was no noise of preparation for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The morning of their eternal overthrow was as calm as any on which the sun had risen upon them. The destroying angel, who slew the first-born of Egypt, spread his mighty wings over the land, and from them dropped down death on every habitation of man and beast. Yet all was quiet as the grave, till the wail of bereavement filled the land with terror. God makes a world with less noise than that produced by man when he makes a coffin. When Jehovah spread out the heavens and set up their unshaken pillars, there was not so much as the sound of a hammer. When on our best railroads we travel at the rate of *sixty* miles an hour, the rumbling noise is heard afar, the sight of our speed is startling to every spectator, and we cannot divest ourselves of apprehension. But ever since we were born we have been riding on a world moved by God at the rate of more than *sixty-two thousand* miles every hour. And yet who has been afraid? who has heard any startling sound? This is the more wonderful because the motion of the earth is not simple but compound. Yet in the midst of all this motion we can hear the chirping of a bird, or the dropping of a pin.

But when God chooses he can make our ears to tingle. By the shaking of a leaf he can startle us, or make us rise up with strange sounds. "The thunder of his power who can understand?" When he shall destroy the world it shall be with sounds that shall awake the dead. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise." When God chooses to be heard, even the mountains give ear, and obey his voice. At his rebuke he dries up the sea, and makes the rivers [illegible]ilderness. Yet, ordinarily, his footsteps are but the silent going forth of his ab

In his mysterious providence God also hides his works and ways from man by commonly removing results far from human view. In autumn the husbandman scatters his wheat and buries it under the ground. It dies. Search and you shall find it rotten. The rigors of a long winter are approaching. The unskilled would say this sowing of seed was madness. But wait till summer, and that husbandman shall shout his harvest home. What thus occurs in the natural world is a type of spiritual things. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Much as the result is hoped for, it is not perceived by any mortal. None but God sees the end from the beginning. Whom he would bless he first puts to the test of patient waiting. If the righteous should see the happy issue of all that befalls them, as it lies open before God, their afflictions would be no trials. Had Abraham known that all God would require of him would be to bind Isaac and lay him on the altar, we never should have heard of the illustrious faith of the father of believers. Jacob once cried out, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away. All these things are against me." He lived to see that all these things were for him. But at the time of his bereavement he saw not the blessed end, and so his virtue was severely tested. If on the day of crucifixion, as on the day of Pentecost, the disciples had clearly perceived the results of that scene of terror, the Shepherd might have been smitten, but the sheep would hardly have been scattered. The language of God's providence well coincides with that of his promise to all his people, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter."

And it is as true of the wicked as of the righteous that they cannot foresee results, and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." None are more surprised than the wicked at the conclusion of things under God's control. The sinner intends, but God superintends. The creature appoints, but God disappoints. Man proposes, but God disposes. Lazarus was filled with wonder to find himself in Abraham's bosom, but Dives was sore amazed to find himself in hell. Neither Pharaoh, nor Belshazzar, nor Herod, nor Pilate, nor Judas, expected such results to themselves as their wickedness wrought out. As they loved cursing, so it came unto them; as they delighted not in blessing, so it was far from them. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." But the wicked promise themselves life in the midst of all iniquity and unbelief. How sorely will their souls be vexed when they find themselves eternally, hopelessly disappointed.

God's ways respecting means are very remarkable. So far as we can see, he often works without means. Perceiving no causes in operation, we expect no effects. Seeing no disease, we expect no death. Not looking for a casualty, it finds us unprovided with remedies, and we are ready to be swallowed up. As we begin to give up all hope, God steps in and relieves us. When he chooses, he dispenses with all means. He did so when he made the world. Again, God often works by means, which seem to us insignificant. "The death of a man at a critical juncture, his disgust, his retreat, his disgrace, have brought innumerable evils on a whole nation. A common soldier, a child, a girl at the door of an inn, have changed the face of fortune, and almost the face of nature." Will God save Rome from pillage? It shall be done by the cackling of geese. Has a man's appointed time upon earth expired? The sting of a bee, the scratch of a pin, a crumb of bread, or a vernal zephyr shall be the means of his death. Will God prolong the life of Hezekiah? A lump of figs shall have healing efficacy. Moreover, God often works contrary to means. How much malpractice in medicine does he provide against, and thus restore the patient. How many blunders in his ministers does he overrule for good. Christ would give sight to a blind man. He makes clay, puts it on his eyes as if to make him more blind, but he is healed. A terrible fall dislocates a joint. The bone is not put fairly back into its place. Years of lameness and suffering succeed. A second fall, worse than the first, jars the frame, jeopards life, but restores the bone to its socket, and soon the man walks and leaps and praises God. By death, God destroyed him that had the power of death. God often works contrary to the natural tendency of means.

God also employs such instruments as greatly confound us. Our ignorance and unbelief would choose those whom God rejects, and reject those whom he selects. Will he cure Naaman's leprosy? A little captive maid shall tell him of the prophet of the Lord. Will he lead forth Israel from Egyptian bondage? That little infant in a basket among the rushes, by edict doomed to death as soon as born, shall come to be the deliverer. Will he make Joseph premier of Egypt? His brethren envy and sell him, the Ishmaelites carry him far from all loved ones, Potiphar imprisons him, the iron enters into his flesh; yet in God's providence every step is onward. How often are those whom we never befriended made to minister to our aid and comfort. Must God's people be brought out of Babylon? Cyrus shall send forth the binding decree. This worshipper of the sun dealt as tenderly with God's people as a nurse with her child. It would not have been more wonderful to see the wolf nourishing and protecting the lamb and the kid. Who would have supposed that God would choose a raven to feed Elijah, the boy Samuel to bear heavy tidings to Eli, or the youth Jeremiah to pull down, destroy and build up kingdoms? God would exalt his Son and give him a name, which is above every name. He is made flesh, born in a manger, is subject to his parents, is tempted, mocked, spit upon, betrayed, denied, condemned, crucified; dead and buried, yet all ends in his exaltation. He, who had made swaddling-bands for the sea, was laid in swaddling clothes that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. By falling he arose above all his enemies, above all the creatures of God.

Will God regenerate a world? It shall not be done by the ministry of angels, but to the poor, condemned, and dying, the riches of his mercy shall be borne in earthen vessels. Will God subdue the world to knowledge, to peace, and righteousness? Humble men shall be his ambassadors. Will he make of his people a glorious church? "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence." Look at that good man surrounded by an infuriated throng. Each one gnashes with his teeth, and is keen for his prey. At the giving of the signal, stone follows stone. Gash after gash is made on the pious sufferer. The blood streams from his head and body. Hard by him stands a small young man, drinking in with malignant joy the groans that fall from the martyr's lips. Like a young tiger, hitherto fed on milk, but now tasting blood, he becomes furious against all who call on the name of Jesus. He breathes out threatenings and slaughter. He sheds innocent blood without remorse and without cessation. Who would believe that this persecutor was the chosen of God, and should yet, with unparalleled zeal and incredible success, preach Jesus, call sinners to repentance, and give joy and courage to the trembling disciples? Yet such was God's plan, and it was all executed. God is a sovereign. His counsel shall stand. He will do all his pleasure. He rejected all the seven elder sons of Jesse, and choose the little boy, David, who had been left with the sheep, and made him king of his people, and the sweet singer of Israel. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Most of the great, useful, and honored men of the next generation are now poor boys, unnoticed by the proud, buffeting difficulties, and forming vigorous characters under the influence of neglect and adversity.

We often tremble to see God pursuing a course which, to our short sight, seems quite contrary to the end to be gained. This is for two purposes. The first is to humble us, and thus prepare us for the reception of his great blessings. The other is to prove that "besides him there is no Saviour." The thorn in Paul's flesh was sharp and painful, and brought from him very bitter cries Then came the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." When mountains and waters and cruel Egyptians hedged in the Israelites on every side, and it was manifest that "in vain was the help of man," then came the word, "Stand still and see the salvation of God," and the sea was cleft in twain, and its waves became walls. "In the mount, it shall be seen," is for a saying in Israel. Even the gospel was not sent till men had racked their inventions, and were at their wits' end. "After that the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." Every thing in its order. When wit has shown its weakness, then God's word comes in and speaks wisdom. When human powers fall prostrate, divine energy produces the desired results. When man gives up, God does the work.

Men are so ignorant of their own hearts that they are incapable of determining what is best for them. Even regenerate men are but partially sanctified and enlightened. But God searches the heart. He understands our whole case. He knows what is most for our good. He sees our strong corruptions and sad deficiencies. When, in mercy to the creature, he comes to heal his spiritual maladies, he does not take counsel of human error and passion. It is right, it is best that he should act according to the wisdom which is infallible. He employs the requisite remedies, and man, in his ignorance, too often says, "If God loved me he would not give me so bitter a cup to drink." But this is man's folly. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Shall human weakness control divine power? Shall finite knowledge prescribe to omniscience? It is the height of wickedness for a worm of the dust to revise the decisions, or rejudge the justice of the Almighty. We should expect God to deal with us in a way, to us incomprehensible, if we did but remember how low, sordid, and narrow, are our views and plans, and how holy, glorious, and eternal are his purposes and designs. We are quite prone to magnify both the good and evil things of time to the disparagement of those of eternity. But when God crosses, afflicts, and mortifies us, he makes us look at the things which are unseen and eternal. If he racks this body with pain, it is that we may think of our house, not made with hands, eternal, and in the heavens. The shaking of this clay tabernacle forces upon us the recollection that this is not our rest, and that we ought to be seeking a heavenly country. If the best man on earth had his own way without divine guidance, he would soon be in full march towards destruction. And how kind is God in wisely and mercifully deciding so many things for us. The man who fears God and loves his little daughter would esteem it a greater affliction to be called on to say when his child should be sick, than he now finds it to nurse her through weeks of disease, close her eyes in death, and then carry her to the grave. God very mercifully bears the heaviest part of all our trials, by marking out our course for us. God is governor. We are servants. To us belong obedience, submission, acquiescence.

REMARKS.

1. The Christian lives and walks by faith, not by sight. Even apostles and prophets did but see through a glass darkly. Paul himself says, "The life, which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." As, "without faith, it is impossible to please God," so, without faith, it is impossible to be pleased with God. Every approved act of the Christian's life is, in some sense, a committing of his affairs to the Almighty. One inspired apostle,

speaking of faith, calls it "precious faith." Another says that the trial of it is "much more precious than gold." No marvel that such commendations are bestowed on this great virtue. It is of rare excellence. Gold perisheth. But faith shall be changed into the beatific vision. Gold is held alike by God's friends and enemies. Faith is a gift bestowed on none but the elect. Gold is gathered from the earth. Faith is a gift descending from heaven. Gold stands us instead only when it is well with us. Faith enables us to walk in darkness, having no light, and yet to trust in the Lord. "I had fainted unless I had believed." There is a sense in which "gold answers all things, so faith gives the soul propriety in all the rich consolations of the gospel, in all the promises of life and salvation, in all needful blessings; it draws virtue from Christ to strengthen itself, and all other graces." Behold the man of faith pressed by temporal and spiritual distresses. See him in the furnace made seven times hotter than it is wont. They, who stand round about, are scorched by the intensity of the heat. Cry to him and say, Brother, how is it with thee now? If faith is in lively exercise, he replies, "When I am tried I shall come forth as gold seven times purified. I know who it is that has said, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." With gold we can buy what we need, if it is in the market; but faith supplies all our lack when universal want prevails. When earth does not own what we need, the man with his bags of gold is on a level with the beggar; but at such a time the believer sings, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Our faith is often sorely tried, but God's word says, "The trial of your faith is found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ." What we need is not less labor or less suffering, burdens less heavy or less numerous, trials less sharp or less lasting. No. What we need is stronger faith. The disciples never offered a better prayer than this: "Lord, increase our faith." Faith, like the club of Hercules, beats down all before it. "Faith makes all evil good to us, and all good better." "All the precepts in the law and in the gospel do hang upon this, Believe." All the comforts and supports of the Christian life depend upon faith. Faint believing produces doubtful walking. Be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Never question his truth, nor doubt his faithfulness. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." "Have faith in God."

2. As the object of God in all his dealings with his people is his own glory and their eternal good, so they ought heartily to concur in these ends, and labor to promote them. God's glory is more *important than* the lives of all his creatures. He has made all *things for himself.* Not an event occurs but for his glory. The

death of Lazarus, of Bethany, was to that end. To the same intent is every pang of his suffering people. Nor does he less surely propose the welfare of his hidden ones in their greatest afflictions. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them, who are the called according to his purpose." Let us then concur and coöperate with God in seeking our good and his glory. We ought to be more anxious to get good out of an affliction than to get rid of it. The kindest wish that any can indulge, respecting their grieving brethren, is, not that they be tempted no more, but that in all their trials they may not sin, nor charge God foolishly. With these views predominant in us, how many powerful temptations would become powerless. Sometimes the afflicted look upon their trials merely as tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins. No doubt God has good ground of controversy with us all. But hear the voice from heaven, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." As God did not give us friends, or health, or property, or reputation, chiefly to please us, so neither does he take them away chiefly to afflict or punish us. His ends are high and holy, wise and benevolent. We should remember that what is loss to us is often gain to others. This is always true when one of our friends dies in the Lord. Wherefore let us gird up the loins of our minds and seek, above all things, to glorify God in every visitation, whether grievous or joyous. Let us rejoice in all that he does. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." The pious Mr. Jay has explained the allusions here made to natural history. The eaglets are fond of the nest; they love just to eat and sleep, and are reluctant to exert themselves till their dam renders the nest so uncomfortable that they can occupy it no longer. Then they go out upon the rocks or the branches of the trees, and learn to walk. By example, she teaches them to exercise their wings, fluttering over them. Then she bears them on her back to great heights, darts from under them, and compels them to use their wings. Then she makes short circuits in the air, and they follow her. She enlarges the range of her flight. and still they imitate her till they can rival her, soaring high in the heavens. Sir Humphrey Davy describes the completion of this training: "I once saw a very interesting sight, above one of the crags of Ben Nevis, as I was going, on the 20th of August, in the pursuit of black game. Two parent eagles were teaching their offspring, two young birds, the manœuvres of flight. They began by rising from the top of a mountain, in the eye of the sun; it was about midday, and bright for this climate. They at first made small circles, and the young birds imitated them; they paused on their wings, waiting till they had made their first flight, and then took a second and larger gyration, always rising towards the sun, and enlarging their circle of flight, so as to make a gradual extended spiral. The young ones still slowly followed, apparently flying better as they mounted; and they continued this sublime kind of exercise, always rising, till they became mere points in the air, and the young ones were lost, and afterwards their parents, to our aching sight." So "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

3. Let us put a watch upon our hearts and lips, lest we should think or say more about God's nature and ways than befits our ignorance and our selfishness. Shall not God do what he will with his own? To us he is not accountable, and it is fearful wickedness to think or speak as if he were. If our reasonings concerning his nature or ways perplex us, it is proof that we have gone too far, and uttered things too wonderful for us. Let us not wade beyond our depth. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." There is much wickedness in indulging in bold speculations and confident reasonings on the nature and government of God. On such subjects, preconceived and rash opinions are too often allowed to set aside the teachings of Scripture. This is always sinful. To every student of divine things God seems to say: "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground." There is too much occasion given by men for the challenge, "Who art thou that repliest against God?" In the book of Job we see to what fearful lengths even good men may go in proud reasonings on Jehovah's ways. For indulging in this sin God gave a terrible rebuke even to the great patriarch. Would that the folly had ended with the man of Uz. Let us take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongues. Yea, let us keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life. "Pride is increased by ignorance; those assume the most, who know the least." And "to be proud of learning is the greatest ignorance." "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." "With the lowly is wisdom." Have docility. "Most men take least notice of what is plain, as if that were of no use; but puzzle their thoughts, and lose themselves in those vast depths and abysses, which no human understanding can fathom." Utter not words without knowledge. Think not as the fools. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth."

4. How excellent are divine things. One says: "Divinity is the haven and Sabbath of all man's contemplations." The subjects, of which it treats, surpass all others in dignity and practical usefulness. It opens to us the glorious fountain of all being and of all blessedness. It tells us whence all creatures came. It gives the true theory of human nature, and teaches man correct views of himself and of his neighbors. It settles the doctrine of an endless life beyond the bounds of time. Its truths have a sovereign efficacy to cheer, guide, and cleanse the soul. For purity, for power, for sublimity, for refreshment, nothing can compare with them. They humble without debasing. They elevate without

puffing up. They beget modesty without cowardice. They embolden without impudence. They inspire salutary fear and animating confidence. They give joy without levity. They make men to sorrow after a godly sort, and yet greatly increase their happiness.

To these ends they have a fitness in themselves. Truth is in its very nature excellent. Religious truth is as far above all other verity as mind is above matter, as eternity is more lasting than time, as God is superior to his works. The words of God are spirit and life. They are wisdom. Their entrance gives light. To those who seek him with all the heart, God makes his truth efficacious by special divine influences. Even a heart dead in sin will revive under the energies of truth in the hands of the great sanctifier. "The first creature of God, in the work of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of his Spirit."

If the study of divine things is not a blessing to any, it is because they are "sensual, having not the Spirit." They are blind and cannot see afar off, and yet are too proud to seek the unction that teacheth all things. They do not in their hearts believe what they know to be true. They restrain prayer before God, even when they hear his servant saying, "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." They obey not, though Christ says, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." They resist not their passions, though the promise is, "The meek will he guide in judgment." Nor do such make proof of the principle: "The hand of the diligent maketh rich." If in this land any man shall not become wise unto salvation, the fault will be his own.

If these things are so, every honest effort to spread the knowledge of God is praiseworthy. A good religious book is worth all it ever costs. To give such a volume is often the noblest charity. To read it with eagerness is to dig after hid treasure. The two great sources of light on divine things are God's works and God's word. Some err by rejecting the volume of nature, and some by rejecting the volume of inspiration. He who rejects either plays the fool. A pious mind loves to learn lessons concerning God from any source. He who asserts that God teaches nothing by what he does, is as blind and perverse as he who holds that God teaches nothing by what he says. For "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."

Yet the highest source of divine knowledge is revelation. In it are found all the saving truths of religion. That speaks clearly of the most vital things. How glorious, and yet how free, is the truth: "Things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children." Of himself, how excellent the revelation God has made: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." These few words give us more true knowledge of God's moral character than all the wise men of old acquired from the whole volume of nature. Revelation is no less clear concerning man's sin and guilt, misery and helplessness. It leaves no doubt respecting either of these. By scores of types, prophecies and promises, it points to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. It assures the conscience of peace by atoning blood. It explains the mystery of sanctification. It pours floods of light on all that needs to be known in order that we may do our duty or maintain solid peace of mind. On the whole subject of God's moral government it is luminous. It goes still further. "Some things, which could not otherwise be read in the book of nature, are legible enough when the lamp of revelation is held up to it." Thus it makes all plain concerning the death both of good and bad men. In the phrase, *death by sin*, we have the cause of all death. In the words, *I am the resurrection and the life*, we have opened to all the pious, a door of hope which shall never be shut. God's word is complete as to our duty and destiny, our privileges and prospects. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb."

5. We ought not to be offended with the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, nor with the doctrine of the Trinity, nor with any other truth of the gospel, on account of its mysteriousness. It is not more incomprehensible that Christ should have two distinct natures united in one person for ever, than that God should have life in himself. He, who can explain the latter, will never be confounded by the former. How existence can be without production is a knot which no creature can untie. To deny the self-existence of God is atheism. To doubt it is to tremble over the darkest gulf that ever yawned. Yet who can understand its nature? But the fact is beyond a question. So the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is clearly revealed in every possible form of speech. He is repeatedly called God and Jehovah. He is said to do divine works, to receive, by God's command, divine honors, and to exercise divine prerogatives. He created all things. He upholds all things. He forgives sins. He made the worlds. He is worshipped by all holy angels and redeemed men. He shall judge the world. These things are so clearly revealed of him that it is perverseness to deny them. Let no man be offended in Christ because of his glory, or the mystery that surrounds him. Were there nothing incomprehensible about him, he would not be able

to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. If God teaches this doctrine, it is true, whether you comprehend it or not. We know not how the grass grows. It is all mystery to us how soil, and air, and water are converted into vegetable substances. It is all mystery to us how bread, and honey, and milk, and meat, are converted into blood, and made to nourish our frames. It is indeed a mystery to us how Christ may be both God and man. But, unless we honor the Son as we honor the Father, we shall be found in open rebellion against God. Jesus himself said: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Nor is the glorious mystery of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead offensive to pious minds. It is for a rejoicing that He, who made us, He, who redeemed us, and He, who sanctifies us, is the one eternal, unchangeable, indivisible Jehovah, subsisting in three persons. The favorite objection urged against this doctrine, from the days of Celsus and Lucian, down to this hour is, its mysteriousness. Lucian's "One three, three one" is repeated in our day by persons who would be very unwilling to enrol their names with his, though they take up the ribaldry, and sit in the seat of that ancient scorner. That everything pertaining to God is, in some points, inscrutable, is not denied. Were it otherwise, who could adore him? When I perfectly understand all about a being, I know that he is either my inferior, or my equal, and so I cannot pay him religious worship. The pious Hervey well says: "I am no more surprised that some revealed truths should amaze my understanding, than that the blazing sun should dazzle my eyes." Robert Hall, speaking of inscrutable things in religion, says: "We rejoice that they are mysterious, so far from being ashamed of them on that account; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their *unsearchable riches* and undefinable grandeur." Dr. Leonard Woods, of Andover, says: "The end of our being does not require that we should completely comprehend either the Creator, or the creation. Were we called to exercise dominion over the universe, it would indeed be necessary that we should be omniscient. But for those, whose business it is to obey and submit, omniscience is not necessary. * * * On inquiry, it will appear that all the most momentous and useful truths relate to objects which are pre-eminently incomprehensible." Bishop Waterland says: "No just objection can be made against the *importance* of any doctrine, from its *mysterious* nature. The most mysterious of all are, in reality, the most important; not because they are mysterious, but because they relate to things *divine*, which must, of course, be mysterious to weak mortals, and, perhaps, to all *creatures* whatever. But even mysterious doctrines have a *bright* side, as well as a *dark* one; and they are *clear* to look upon, though too deep to be *seen through*." Richard Baxter says: "The mystery of the incarnation alone may find you work to search and admire many ages." John Newton says: "If I did not find many things in the Bible proposed rather to my faith than to my reason, I could not receive it as a revelation from God, because it would want the grand characteristic of his majesty." Dr. Scott says: "The mystery of godliness continued a great mystery after the fullest revelation of it. The revelation and belief of it have always been, and are, the beginning and spring of all pious dispositions and affections in the hearts of fallen men, and of all the spiritual worship of God in the world." Bishop Sherlock, no less pertinently observes, that "So far is it from being an objection against the Gospel of Christ, that it contains many wonderful mysteries of the hidden wisdom of God, that, as our case stands, without a mystery, it is impossible for us to be saved: for, since reason and nature cannot find the means of rescuing sinners from punishment, and of making atonement to the justice of God; since they cannot prescribe a proper satisfaction for sin, in which the honor of God and the salvation of men shall be at once consulted; since they cannot remedy the corruption that has spread through the race of mankind, or infuse new principles of virtue and holiness into the souls already subdued to the lust and power of sin; since, if they could procure our pardon for what is past, they cannot secure us for the future from the same temptations, which by fatal experience we know we cannot withstand: since, I say, these things cannot be done by the means of reason and nature, they must be done by such means as reason and nature know nothing of; that is, in other words, they must be done by mysterious means, of the propriety of which we can have no adequate notion or conception.

"If you stand in need of no new favor, if you aim not so high as eternal life, religion without mysteries may well serve your turn. The principles of natural religion tend to procure the peace and tranquillity of this life; and the not distinguishing between religion as a rule of life for our present use and well-being here, and as the means of obtaining pardon for sin and eternal life hereafter, may have in some measure occasioned the great complaint against the mysteries of the gospel: for mysteries are not indeed the necessary parts of religion, considered only as a rule of action; but most necessary they are to it, when considered as a means of obtaining pardon and eternal glory. And this farther shows, how unreasonably men object against the mysterious wisdom of the gospel, since all that the gospel prescribes to us as our duty is plain and evident; all that is mysterious is on God's part, and relates entirely to the surprising acts of divine wisdom and mercy in the redemption of the world. Consider the gospel then as a rule of action, no religion was ever so plain, so calculated upon the principles of reason and nature; so that natural religion itself had never more natural religion in it. If we consider the end proposed to us, and the means used to entitle us to the benefit of it, it grows mysterious, and soars above the reach of human reason; for God has done more for us than reason could teach us to expect, or can now teach us to comprehend. Let us then do our part, which we plainly understand, and let us trust in God that he will do his; though it exceeds the strength of human wisdom to comprehend the length and depth and breadth of that wisdom and mercy, which God has manifested to the world through his Son Christ Jesus our Lord." Nor does God's word teach any different doctrine. In fact, it fully supports these views. Paul said: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Let us love all that God has spoken. If it fills us with reverence and godly fear, if it humbles us in the dust, if it awakens pious wonder, if it stirs us up to diligence in looking into these things, it must be of excellent use. But to carp at God's word, or any portion thereof, is both criminal and dangerous. Let every man beware, lest Christ and his salvation, be to him for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense; for a gin and for a snare; for many among men shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

6. What madness it is for any creature to be found fighting against God. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. He hides himself, and all nature stands aghast. He passes by, and a great and strong wind rends the mountains, and breaks in pieces the rocks. He utters his voice, and the earth melts. He wills it, and a world arises. He frowns, and the pillars of heaven tremble. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. * * All nations are before him as nothing." "He bringeth princes to nothing." "He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." Before him the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers. Who can resist such a God? Some have fought against him, but who ever conquered him or escaped a certain overthrow? Was there ever a company of more consummate fools than Pharaoh and his great men, although they thought to "deal wisely." Behold the horse and his rider, the warrior and the chariot, sunk like lead in the mighty waters. "The Lord is a man of war. * * * He hath triumphed gloriously. * * * Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Let every man know that the Lord, he is God, and that to put one's self in array against him is to advertise the whole universe that he is a fool, bent on his own eternal undoing. A feather can never resist the fires of a furnace, the elements cannot withstand the intense heat of the last day; neither can a worm of the dust stand out against God. Sin is as foolish as it is criminal. If, in temporal affairs, any man violated the laws of his existence, as in spiritual affairs every wicked man does, any court would pronounce him a madman, and subject him to the restraints of a lunatic asylum. Wisdom says: "Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the LORD. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." To think of God's wrath is fearful. To taste it is worse

than a potion of wormwood and gall. To endure it is intolerable. A drop of it fell into the conscience of Belshazzar, and his knees smote together; of Herod, and he gave up the ghost; of Judas, and he turned suicide. A few drops of it have sent the voice of wailing along every valley and over every mountain in a great nation. A sprinkle of it fell on sinning angels, and, in a moment, they shrivelled into devils. A vial of it broken on our globe will yet send it blazing through the universe. The fierceness of that wrath will cow the spirit of devils, and make sinners of our race wish they had never been born. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

7. With so great a God, great sinners may hope to find great mercy. He punishes, but he also pardons, like a God. He shows compassion to the chief of sinners. His loving-kindness reaches to the heavens. If any of us shall not be saved, it will not be because God is not merciful; but because we are proud, rebellious, and self-righteous. Sometimes we think our sins too great to be pardoned by the Lord. But this is because of our wicked unbelief. Hear his own words of love; "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Such offers ought to silence all our cavils, and put to shame all our unbelief. If we knew more of God, we should be less apt to distrust him. He, who has spent all his days among the mountains which lift their brows above the clouds, and has never seen any body of water greater than the mountain torrent, may naturally doubt whether there is water enough on earth to cover the peaks of his native land. But let him once cross the Atlantic, let him put down his lead thousands of fathoms, let him find that it is three thousand miles wide and yet greater in length, and he will see how all his native mountains could be buried in the sea. So our sins are great, truly as great as we ever thought them to be. But God's mercy is greater than we have ever imagined. Let us explore it and meditate upon it, till we see how He can pardon iniquity, pass by transgression, delight in mercy, have compassion on us, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

8. The true glory of churches is the presence and blessing of Jehovah. The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built was, that one was his own domicil, while the other was an habitation for the Lord. The great difference between a saint and a sinner is, that one is the temple of Belial, and the other the temple of the Lord. In monarchical governments, it is esteemed a great honor to live or to worship in the same house with the king. But wherever churches are animated with real love to God, the King of kings blesses the place of their meeting with his presence. This is honor indeed. What a glorious promise is that, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The fulfillment is as

certain as the blessing promised is inestimable. How foolish are we when we put our confidence in means and men, in singers and preachers, to make the sanctuary a delight. They may provide for the proprieties of things. Even a corpse may be decently arrayed. But if the place of meeting is to be made to our souls the house of God, and the gate of heaven, if we, who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins, are to be made alive unto God, it must be by the gracious presence of Him whose we are, and whom we serve. Let God's people never weary of looking to Him, who is the glory of his people Israel. Let them never vainly imagine that they are anything, or can do anything as of themselves. Without him they can do nothing. That was a wise prayer of Moses, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." If God go before us, our enemies shall be scattered. If he be our rereward, our enemies shall not overtake us. If he be our portion, we shall not want. If he be our glory, we shall be eternally illustrious.

9. What a capital error is that which teaches that God can be fitly represented or worshipped by images. To bow down to the sun, moon, and stars, and worship all the host of heaven, or to "change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible men, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," ought to be by all people held and declared idolatry. In his being, perfections, works, and ways, God is incomparable. "Among the gods, there is none like thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works." "Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord; who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" "To whom will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" The greatness of the sin of worshipping images, or of worshipping God by images, arises from these facts: It is positively forbidden in many portions of Scripture; it is contrary to God's spirituality; it degrades all our conceptions of Jehovah to a depth of debasement intolerable to God. "We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." The spirit of the first and the letter of the second commandment forbid such worship. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." In his address to Israel given us in the *fourth* chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses greatly insists upon the exclusion of images from religious worship. Besides, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." God is not in any way personally connected with matter. He is an uncreated, immaterial substance.

He is an active, intelligent, infinite spirit. The Belgic confession well says: "We believe in heart, and confess with the mouth, that there is one only and simple spiritual essence, which we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, who is wholly wise, and a most plentiful well-spring of all good things." We cannot too carefully guard God's worship against all corruptions, all admixtures of human inventions. Image worship is abominable idolatry. The Most High is not like the gods of the heathen. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Because he fills heaven and earth he cannot be placed in a niche or on the altar of any house. Nor can any true image of him be made or conceived. The most exquisite piece of art is no more like God, and is no more suited to give us just ideas of him, than the most unsightly daub, or the rudest block of wood or stone.

10. How amiable is the whole character of God. Love to him is as reasonable as it is obligatory. When a scoffing infidel thought to perplex a pious little girl, by asking, "How big is your God?" she replied, "He is so great that the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he is so kind as to dwell in this little heart of mine." He dwells with all his people. He walks in them. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." What matchless love is here! He who is over all God blessed forever, condescends to take up his abode in our hearts. "The tabernacle of God is with men." He that is higher than the highest, does not despise our low estate. How hateful is the arrogant littleness of man, compared with the condescending greatness of God. Our God is in the heavens, and yet he is the great comforter of man. If this is so, how we should love and fear, serve and obey, praise and adore him. "We should give him the same place in our hearts that he holds in the universe." We shall never be able to pay the debt we owe him. Let us give him all. Even that is but little; yet he will receive it.

Maker! Preserver! my Redeemer! God!
Whom have I in the heavens but Thee alone?
On earth, but thee, whom should I praise, whom love?
For thou hast brought me hitherto, upheld
By thy Omnipotence; and from thy grace
Unbought, unmerited, though not unsought—
The wells of thy salvation, hast refreshed
My spirit, watering it at morn and eve.
GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.

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SERMON DCIII.

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CHRIST ALONE.

"I have trodden the wine-press alone."—Isaiah lxiii. 3.

The passages in connection with the text, present to our view a grand and glowing picture of a triumphant, glorious conqueror. The scenes of the battle, and the victory, are described with the vividness of dramatic interest and power. The whole, as some suppose, has a literal reference to the victories of Jehovah over his enemies in the land of Idumea; and he is represented as returning from the field of conflict, and complete conquest, in great majesty and might, covered with the blood of battle. As the grapes in the wine-press are crushed beneath the feet of him who treads it, and are unable to resist the pressure, so had the enemies of God been crushed by his strength, and in his fury.

These passages have also been thought to contain a prophecy concerning the future triumph of the Redeemer, in the destruction of anti-Christ, and the foes of his kingdom; and to refer to the same events that are spoken of in the book of Revelation, where the appearance of the conquering Saviour and his vengeance upon his enemies are alluded to in similar terms. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

But if we turn our attention to the work of Christ in the great plan of atoning mercy, we shall find that there was an object to be accomplished, vast and glorious; a triumph to be achieved over obstacles difficult and stupendous; and in the mighty conflict with principalities and powers, that there was blood to be shed, and foes to be vanquished. And in this sublime enterprise of a world's redemption, we may not inappropriately apply the language of the prophet to the Son of God. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me."

The text has been selected as fitly describing the peculiar character of Jesus Christ as the only sacrifice for sin, and Saviour of sinners. No other person or being in the universe could occupy the place which he fills—no other could accomplish the work which he has wrought. Much of the prophet's language just quoted has a peculiar appropriateness to the Saviour's atoning work. He looked upon the fallen world, and there was none to help. And in his sufferings and death he trod the wine-press *alone*. There are several particulars, in reference to the work of redemption, in which the peculiar character and office of Christ are seen. Some of them let us consider. CHRIST ALONE—this is our theme.

I. He was alone in his *personal undertaking of the work of salvation*. It was God's purpose to make this sin-ruined world the theatre of divine communications and transactions, where should be displayed some of the brightest exhibitions of his benevolence, glory, and power. Here, where Satan had succeeded in alienating the human race from God, and bringing his wrath upon them, Jehovah determined to rear for himself a kingdom which should finally prevail against the foe, *that where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound.*

To remove the obstacles in the way of this difficult, but grand enterprise, and accomplish this glorious result, it was necessary that some one should undertake the execution of the work, who was adequate to meet all its exigencies. On whom shall the appointment fall? Where is the being qualified for the task? Who can pardon and rescue the guilty, and yet not abridge the claims of a broken law? Who can sustain the integrity of the Divine government, and yet cancel the rebel's transgression?

Who can open the door, barred by Infinite Justice, and let the prisoner go free? Who, though clothed with any one of the attributes of Jehovah, can effect the salvation of sinners? Mercy, heaven-descended, might pity and plead for them; but mercy could never atone for their guilt. Love, the very essence of Deity, might earnestly desire to redeem them from death, and lift them up into life and liberty; but Love cannot annihilate Justice. The guilty are *sinners* rightly condemned—the curse of that law so glorious in its nature, so solemn in its sanctions, so awful in its penalty, and which they have violated, is resting, like the weight of eternity upon them. And that law, like its Divine Author, is unchangeable; it cannot be abridged or repealed. Who, then, is able to remove the difficulty—to vindicate the law—to satisfy justice, and yet pardon and save the sinner? Can any one of the human race, the most virtuous and worthy of all, do this? Alas! such an one himself must perish unless that work be done for him! Unable to save himself, what can he do towards lifting a world up out of its condemnation! Is an *angel* adequate to the task? Angels are dependent beings. When they have done their utmost to serve and glorify God, in the spheres in which they move, they have only fulfilled their obligations to Him. They have no virtue to expend in atoning for the sins of others. They cannot save even one of the fallen spirits, that for their rebellion were expelled from heaven. How then can they work out the redemption of the world? They may earnestly desire to look into the great mystery of salvation, and to scan its wonders; but, being finite in wisdom and power, the work itself is beyond the scope of their apprehension and infinitely exceeds the utmost reach of their ability. The birds sing their glad welcome to the life and loveliness of a vernal season; but they have no power to renew the face of the earth. So angelic spirits, those immortal birds of Paradise, may fill all heaven with joy when a sinner repents: but they never could produce the new creation over which they rejoice. Even God himself could not do this work in his absolute character, and without the mediatorial intervention of his Son. There was but one being in the universe who could render the world's salvation possible, and that was Jesus Christ. "Lo, I come," said he, "to do thy will, O God."

II. Christ was alone in *the Divine Incarnation*. This was essential to the work of redemption. In this appears its wonderful adaptation—its astonishing efficacy, "In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Here we have a subject of infinite interest and importance. Here we are taught one of the most remarkable and marvellous truths contained in the whole compass of revelation—the Incarnation of Deity—the coming of Christ into the world. This wonderful event stands by itself alone. Nowhere is there anything to correspond to it. Nothing in the universe is like it. Immanuel, God with us, becoming a helpless infant, and passing through all the stages of an earthly existence! Amazing fact! Mystery of mysteries! Jehovah-Jesus came into this world—

"From the highest throne of glory,
To the cross of deepest woe;
Came to ransom guilty creatures."

The Almighty and glorious Creator, by whom, and for whom are all things, made his abode with sinful men, in the humblest walks of life.

This is a solitary instance. No being from another world has ever done the like. None has come from a distant sphere to make earth his home. Angels, at different times, have visited our world. But their visits have been few and brief. They have never become inhabitants of this realm of sin. There is no record of one's ever being born, or having died on these mortal shores. We, sometimes, in our communings with God, in our thoughts and visions of heaven, in a solemn proximity to death under the power of disease, or in the departure of a pious friend seem to linger on the confines of another world; but we have not yet entered it, have not respired its air, nor experienced its reality. So unseen celestial messengers, feeling a deep and strange sympathy in our behalf, may be around us, and among us, but they are not of us; we are not bound to them by any ties of kindred. But God, the Redeemer, came nearer to us than they. He crossed the awful chasm that lay between the Divine and the human. "*He took on him the seed of Abraham*." that he might grasp and encircle us with all the powerful sympathies of kindred and brotherhood. And O, what treasures, what gifts of life and love, of hope and immortality, he brought with him, and laid at our feet.

Great men have appeared in different ages and at distant epochs who have shed upon the world the light of their genius, and changed by their deeds the current of its history. The heavens have opened at their glance, and in beautiful order, have gathered into constellations, spheres and systems. The earth, summoned and questioned by science, has revealed her laws and disclosed her treasures. And mind itself, acquiring new vigor from its investigations, has ventured on flights and made discoveries, not only astonishing in themselves, but to-day affecting all the interests of the world's civilization. Confucius, in wisdom towered above his countrymen like the princely oak in the forest. Socrates, rising superior to his age, seemed almost to break through into the region of Divine illumination. Calvin, in theological discrimination and statement, was an Alpine summit among his contemporaries. Newton, grasping some of the simplest laws of nature, was borne aloft to a grand survey of the system of the universe., Washington, in defence of human right and freedom, and as an example of moral virtue, patriotic devotion, and self-sacrifice, stands forth in unparalleled grandeur. Yet these, in all their greatness, were only men. They were of the earth, earthy. But when Jesus appeared, though "found in fashion as a man," he was in reality " the Lord from heaven." And how does all science pale before his revealings of life and immortality. When he spoke to man, what gleams of hope shot into the gloom of despair! He pointed to the skies, and disclosed a pathway leading to the glorious regions that lie beyond the stars! He planted the seeds of the great banyan tree of the Gospel, which shall take root in every land, and whose branches bathed in the light and vocal with the music of heaven, shall overshadow the whole earth.

Many distinguished men have been born into the world; but only one God-man—Christ Jesus—has appeared. The Divine Incarnation is an event that stands by itself alone. And when we connect that event with its grand design, and contemplate our own relation to it, how does it rise in greatness and value, until we realize at length something of its infinite importance! Other events may engross the attention of the world, for a season; but this, in its bearings upon human salvation, and approaching eternity, immeasurably surpasses them all. And its importance will increase. As earth fades away, and its vanities recedes—as life wanes into the shadow of death, and the world to come draws near, our relation to Christ, in the work of Redemption, wrought through the mystery of the Incarnation, will tower into an interest that overshadows every thing else. Eternity will not be too long to lament our folly, if we have not availed ourselves of the gift immortal which it offers, nor too long to utter our grateful rejoicings, if by it we have been made partakers of the Divine Nature.

> "Dear Lord and Saviour! for thy gifts
> The world were poor in thanks, though every soul
> Were to do nought but breathe them, every blade
> Of grass, and every atomie of earth
> To utter them like dew."

III. *In the purity of his life and character of his ministrations,* Christ was alone. God and man, mysteriously united in the Incarnation, he lived here humble, obedient as a creature, yet exercising the authority and power of the Creator. As God, he was the Author and Promulgator of the Divine Law; as man, he recognized and obeyed to perfection all its requirements. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In this respect he was *alone.* Patriarchs and prophets under the former dispensation were not, nor have apostles and saints under the gospel, though eminent servants of God, and occupying by his appointment positions of great responsibility and usefulness, been free from imperfection and sin. Moses, with all his meekness and wisdom, sometimes erred in speech and action. David, a man after God's own heart though he was, experienced the bitterness of remorse and repentance for his fearful transgression. Paul and Barnabas, chosen apostles of our Lord, yet differing in a matter of comparative unimportance, separated from each other amid sharp contention. So imperfection in wisdom and action attaches more or less to all human beings, even the most godly and sagacious. It exists in the toil-worn, faithful missionary abroad, and in the simple-hearted disciple at home. It is found in the pulpit; it is not absent from the pew. Not so with Christ. No blemish was ever discovered in him. Not the slightest admixture of human infirmity marred the resplendent integrity of his character, or detracted from the completeness and glory of his perfect example. Amid all his temptations and conflicts, privations and sorrows—amid all the misrepresentation and insult, the calumny and cruelty, of which he was the subject—he never did a wrong act, indulged an evil thought, or contracted the least taint of impurity. O, what a treasure earth held—a Being of sinless perfection.

Look at his ministrations—his works of mercy and of might. In these he stands alone, excelling all who lived before him, and all who have come after him. Whether he opened his lips as a Teacher, or commanded a miracle, "never man spake like this man." How great the number and variety of the mighty works he wrought—many of them recorded, or only hinted at in the narratives of his life. He controlled the elements of nature—restored to life the dead and buried—exercised dominion over evil spirits—cured, instantaneously, diseases. Wherever he went, he scattered mercy and blessing, life and salvation. The supernatural energy, the omnipotent power by which all this was accomplished, was not derived from another, but was inherent in himself.

Though in the patriarchal and prophetic periods, and in apostolic times, the power of working miracles was, to a limited extent, bestowed, yet the recipients of that power always ascribed its source and efficiency to God. They were its appointed instrumentality; and it was often with apparent difficulty that the work was wrought. Not thus was it with the more stupendous miracles of Christ. "*He spake, and it was done.*" Distance and difficulty hindered him not. The nobleman's son, five leagues away, was suddenly healed by a word. One leper is cured by a touch and ten others by an exercise of will. Not with such ease did Elijah bring the rain from heaven, or restore the dead child to life. The wonderful works of Christ are more perfect and sublime than any ever performed by others. A hundred men with twenty loaves are fed by Elisha; but Jesus with five loaves feeds fifty hundred. They to whom superhuman power was delegated could only exercise it through some object of instrumentality. Moses accomplished his mighty deeds in Egypt with the rod which he bore with him; nor would the sea divide without his stretching that wondrous staff over its surface. Nor would the bitterness of Marah become sweet, without his casting the tree into its waters. But Christ needed no instrumentality—no name foreign to himself. His word is Omnipotence. "*Be whole!*" and health returns; "*Arise!*" and the sleeping dead awakes; "*Come forth!*" and the tomb gives back its trust; "*Peace, be still!*" and the tumultuous billows are calmed. Death and the grave bore witness to his declaration: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life.*" The winds and the waves and the storm obeyed their God. The Apostles ascribed their miraculous power to Him. To the cripple at the Beautiful gate they said: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk." But Christ said to those whom he healed: "*I* will, be thou clean; Thou deaf and dumb spirit, *I* charge thee to come out of him:" and to the dead son of the widow of Nain, "Young man, *I* say unto thee, arise!" Thus do the miracles of Christ surpass all others—establishing his Messiahship and Divine mission, and symbolizing the future triumphs of his gospel.

IV. *Christ was alone in his sufferings.* Suffering is the result of sin. It comes in consequence of the violation of God's moral law or the laws of our own physical constitution. Whoever sins against God, or against himself, *must* suffer. Jesus taught this when he charged the impotent man whom he had healed at Bethesda, saying, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." But the sufferings of the Saviour had no such origin as this. They were not the result of any sin which he had committed, of any law he had broken. Intense as they were, infinitely beyond all that mortal ever experienced, they were endured by a Being of spotless innocence. When he bowed under the agony of the garden, and prayed that, if it were possible, that cup might pass from him—the pains which he felt were not those of remorse. When his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"—that bloody baptism of anguish overwhelmed him, not in consequence of any guilt of his own. It was the crushing weight of a world's iniquities whose awful pressure he sustained. It was the innocent suffering for the guilty, that the guilty might escape eternal condemnation and wrath. It was the Almighty Saviour, as a voluntary substitute for the sinner under the law, that he might be "the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth." "Truly, he bore griefs and carried our sorrows"—treading the wine-press alone. In that dreadful, solitary hour, "On him was laid the iniquity of us all;"

"That he who gave man's breath might know
The very depths of human woe."

V. *Christ was alone in his death.* There has been but one Calvary—one cross of expiation—one vicarious victim—one expiring Saviour, whose blood is efficacious to atone for sin. The death of that Saviour stands out in the universe by itself in unparalleled sublimity and moral grandeur. That was the culminating point in the great work of atonement—the tremendous crisis where the hope of the world was centred and suspended. O what a scene for heaven and earth to witness! There stood the Saviour, firm to his purpose, bearing up the burden of a condemned and dying world. "*I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me.*"

Martyrs have died for their faith—patriots have sacrificed their lives for their country—but there has been no death in our world like that of Christ. Were it possible for man to give a thousand lives, "*none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.*" "*But God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" Benefits sometimes accrue to others when men die. The monarch of an empire, the chief magistrate of a nation, being removed by death, another succeeds to his honours. When a man of wealth dies, his children come into the possession of a fortune. But there is no moral virtue in the death of any human being. When the King of Israel wept over his fallen son and poured forth the touching lamentation, "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom," had he been permitted to do so, he could not have saved the soul of his beloved, but rebellious boy. What were the benefits resulting from the death of Christ? That death opened the door for the salvation of a world. It was that which bridged the awful gulf that hopelessly separated man from God—earth from heaven. In that death, Justice and Forgiveness mingled and blended—"Mercy and Truth met together—Righteousness and Peace kissed each other." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," through the efficacy of that atoning sacrifice.

Jesus came into the world to die. That event was always before him. Never did he lose sight of it amid all his journeyings, all the exhibitions of his benevolence and power. He looked forward to the solemn scene: he often alluded to it; he desired its fulfilment. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" As he saw the event approaching—in all its dread and unutterable reality—he knew that he must endure it *alone*. He had always had a few sympathizing disciples and friends; he had had the presence and aid of his Father: but now, in the very darkest scene of his agony, he was to be left to himself. O, what were his emotions, when he uttered the words, "Father, the hour is come!"

As the terrible tragedy proceeded, where were his disciples? “ Of the people there was none with me.” As the weight of the world's guilt rested upon him in that dark and awful hour, why did he exclaim, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?” Did not his Father leave him to bear that weight alone, that his value, as a complete sacrifice and an Almighty Saviour, might be manifest both in severity and glory? *He trod the wine-press alone.* He came forth from that scene of struggle and conflict a a triumphant victor—man's great enemy conquered, and the world in possession of a finished redemption. His garment were dyed with the blood of atonement. In his resurrection, he appeared “ glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.”

Where shall we find a paralled to all this ? Has another such scene transpired, is another such fact lodged in any part of the universe ? History ! thou hoary chronicler of the past, unroll thy records, disclose their wonders, and search out all thou hast forgotten to, write—and wilt thou find another event like this ? Prophet ! that gazest down the ages to come, and seest all that is glorious and marvellous in the future—say, is it there? Ye worlds that sweep the circle of the heavens, which of you has been the place where “ *God was manifest in the flesh ?*” Where, in all your realms, has a Saviour died ? Feeling, perhaps, the influence of that death, restraining, saving, glorious—yet it transpired not with you ! O earth, rebellious earth ! how has Jehovah looked upon thee and visited thee, and made thy one and only Golgotha the centre of a system before which the stars in yonder canopy shall fade, and all material splendor vanish away !

VI. *Christ was alone in his intercessory and mediatorial work* “ For there is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” When, after his humiliation, he ascended triumphant, he took our nature with him up to the throne of intercession, there as the God-man to mediate and plead in behalf of sinners. There is no other medium of access to God and heaven. The Jewish priesthood, having fulfilled its appointment, was abolished when Christ appeared. All its service and its ceremonials were superseded by the in-coming of a new dispensation, with its more excellent ministry, and wherein Jesus “ is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.” There is no priestly office on earth now ; there are no sacerdotal grades and sacrifices akin to those of the Aaronic institution. The plea for their existence and the support they claim are, under the gospel, false in theory and without foundation in fact. They are derogatory to Christ, and an infringement on the method of salvation by grace. They detract from the value of the great sacrifice, and obstruct and involve the way to the Only Intercessor. Ministerial functions and religious ceremonies, founded on offices and rites of the Jewish economy, are like the employment of an obsolete agency that has fulfilled its purpose, and been dismissed. It is as though a man, after his edifice was completed, should insist on retaining as a part of the building, the scaffolding, the ropes, and the ladders, which had once been needful and proper, but are now not only useless, but an incumbrance and a blemish. Now, the redeemed disciples of our Lord, wherever they are found, are "an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." They are to execute the commission and commands of the Head and Lawgiver of the Christian Church, and thus "show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." Christ himself is the High Priest of their profession, who is passed into the heavens, hath an unchangeable priesthood, and "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." No human being, whatever be his ecclesiastical titles or pretensions, can act for us as a mediator, or a bestower of pardon. No early rite or ceremony can effect our regeneration. No mere church *organization* or enclosure can invest us with the privileges of Christian discipleship. We must come directly and personally to Jesus, in penitence and faith, trusting alone in him, and resting all our hope on his atoning sacrifice, or we cannot be accepted of God and saved. Man, conscious of his spiritual need, is ever prone to works of merit, to trust in ceremonies or to establish his own righteousness. This is seen in Pagan idolatries and Papal superstitions, and also in a religion that is formal or merely sentimental. "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" is a question that greeted the ears of Christ. His reply was characteristic. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." Simple faith in Jesus—heart-yielding submission to God through him—is the sinner's first, and chief duty; and, without this, whatever else he may do, heaven will be shut against him. The only mediator and intercessor hath said, "I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Apostles have added, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Such brethren, is Christ our Lord and Saviour, in his alone undertaking the work of our redemption—in his incarnation, his life and deeds, his sufferings, his death, his intercession. In view of what has been said, I observe,

1. He is *the alone Saviour for us.* As sinners, included among the lost whom he came to seek and to save, when we see his adaptation to his great work, and realize our need, we cannot

but feel that there is none but Christ. All our merits, works, hopes—what are they without Christ?

"Should my tears for ever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know,
All for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

What divine attributes, what infinite riches are his! What clustering excellencies, what unrivalled attractions centre in Him! "Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious"—the "chiefest among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely." He is our life, our hope, our joy. And we are complete in him, in whom all fulness dwells, and "who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." He is all this to every believer in Him, whatever be his rank, wealth, or intelligence. To all he is the Alpha and Omega of their salvation. In gladness and gloom, in prosperity and adversity, in life and in death, here and hereafter, he is the all-sufficient and eternal portion of their souls. From every heart renewed, there goes up continually to Christ, the grateful and adoring aspiration: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee."

2. Without faith in Christ there is no salvation. A sinner out of Christ, is a sinner lost. A world without the knowledge of Christ, is a world lying in darkness and the shadow of death. Whatever else a nation, a community, an individnal, may have, if they have not Christ enthroned in the heart, and the principles of his gospel incorporated in the life, they are enemies to God, and heirs of hell. They may have intelligence, refinement, and wealth—may have splendid churches, and gorgeous ceremonials—may hear and speak the name of Jesus,—but every soul that does not apprehend Him by faith, and personally submit to Him, to be his, and to do his will, has no part nor lot with him. Sinners are condemned—lost for ever—if they have nor Jesus for their Saviour! What avail the forms of religion, if the power of godliness be absent? Of what value is a church that does not hold Christ as the only mediator and intercessor before God, and through whom alone sinners are pardoned? Of what benefit is a ministry that does not preach Christ as he is,—Christ first, Christ last, Christ always, Christ *alone*, as the apostles preached him? Contemplating this subject in all its high interest and importance, can we not sympathize with Paul, in his declaration to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." In his letter to the Galatians, the apostle speaks of some who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, by conforming to existing rites not required by the gospel, and so avoid persecution for the cross of Christ. But Paul spurned everything like a worldly and fashionable religion. "God forbid," said he, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." There is nothing men so much need as

the gospel of Christ—the cross of Christ—a crucified Saviour. Salvation, the Bible, a hope in Jesus, are infinitely more important to them than physical improvements or intellectual advancement—than railroads, telegraphs, and all the gold of California and Australia. And this is our work and labour of love—to make known to men the truth as it is in Jesus; to follow humbly in the footsteps of our Master, and preach the gospel to the poor, and to all to whom we may gain access. "The field is the world." In our churches and the communities where we dwell—among the destitute in our land, and in far distant heathen nations and tribes—we may be workers together with God, sending the gospel to all as he gives us ability. Providence is opening effectual doors, leading into vast fields where we may enter and sow the seed of the kingdom. Idolatry, error, and false religion will spread, unless the gospel in its purity be diffused as the chief counteracting and supplanting influence. And in this work of evangelization, there is a peculiar obligation resting on those who, in matters of religious belief and practice, reject all mere human authority, and, with a conscientious and unswerving regard for the teachings of Divine truth, acknowledge "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

3. How great the guilt of the rejecter of Christ! To despise such a Saviour, to trample upon such mercy, and turn from the pleadings of such love, as the gospel presents, must insure an awful doom. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" "He that despised Moses' law, died without mercy." How aggravated then, will be the punishment of him who perishes under the gospel. Come, O sinner, to Christ! He has rendered your salvation possible—certain, if you believe. As certain will be your ruin if you believe not. You must reap as you have sown.

4. How glorious the prospect of the believer in Jesus! They who have followed him in the regeneration, who have fellowship with his sufferings, who remember his commandments to do them, shall share in the infinite goodness of his grace and love. No blessing will be withheld. Nothing shall deprive them of his favor, and their heavenly inheritance. All things are theirs—life, death—the present, the future. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Trusting in the Son of his love, he will surely do for us all we need. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. *Much more* then, adds the apostle, "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Great and precious are the Divine promises, full of encouragement and hope to the disciples of Jesus. God's people are his heritage and care. They shall never be left without a comforter and guide. The Saviour has gone to prepare a place for them, and he will come again, and receive them to himself. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."

That day fast approaches. Its highest glory will consist not in the unparalleled scenes and events that will attendit—the vast and shining array of accompanying angels; the dazzling splendours of the great white throne; the sound of the archangel's trumpet exceeding loud, waking all the dead; the sublime exhibition of omnipotent power witnessed in the resurrection; the wrapping earth in a sheet of flame, and rolling the heavens together as a scroll—not in any or all these will the Son of God find his highest and peculiar honours; but rather in his ransomed people; for he will come *to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe!* We know much of Christ in this world. We are united to him by faith. His presence and blessing are with us, and our lives are hid with him in God. Still, we know but in part here—we see through a glass darkly. But the day cometh when we shall see face to face and know as we are known. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." O, in that day, free from imperfection and sin, we we shall see in the great propitiation new beauties and enrapturing glories. Our eyes will rest on new attractions at Bethlehem. Our undying interest in Gethsemane will grow deeper and more intense. Calvary will be surrounded by a more resplendent halo of glory. The Cross will furnish exhaustless lessons that we may study with increasing interest through the ages of eternity. The tomb where Jesus lay, and whence he rose triumphant, will shine as the gate of Paradise. And Olivet's summit of ascension will be tipped with the golden sunlight of heaven. Though these places as literal localities will have passed away, yet in their spiritual significance, as connected with the great truths of our religion, they will remain for ever; and, as we contemplate our interests associated therewith from the serene heights of immortality, all our admiration of their value and glory will centre in CHRIST ALONE.

SERMON DCIV.

BY REV. J. MANNING SHERWOOD.

BIBLE PREACHING.*

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

It is an undeniable fact that the pulpit greatly sympathizes with and is powerfully affected by the peculiar type of the times in which it is called to exercise its ministrations. It is right and best that it should be so to a certain extent. There is profound philosophy as well as simple doctrine in the gospel; and he is the most effective preacher who knows how to wield that philosophy so as best to adapt and enforce the doctrine. There is a high sense in which the preacher must be a *man of the times*, to make his influence felt. But there is danger, extreme danger, lest the pulpit instead of controlling and moulding the age to the true type of the gospel, suffer itself to be swayed by and conformed to the age. And this would be fatal to its power and success. The preacher who is only a man of the times—who bodies forth in his ministry only the popular sentiment and type of life—is not a preacher who wins souls to Christ. The gospel in all its facts and doctrines, is one and the same in all ages. One spirit animates it—one life pervades it all. And no ministry is or can be effective which fails to set forth that gospel in its essential facts and doctrines, spirit and life. So long as the Bible remains the only Divinely inspired book, and so long as it shall please God by the foolishness of preaching to save sinners, so long must this ancient, and, in the judgment of not a few, *antiquated* book, be the one theme, one inspiration, one type and life of the Christian ministry. He is the wisest and most successful minister who so comprehends and is able to seize upon the public mind of his day—the peculiar phases of thought and life which characterize his time—as to infuse into the great mind and heart of the world, most of the doctrine and life of the Divine Word.

The kind of preaching needed by the present age is the subject I have chosen as appropriate to this occasion. I shall allow myself a considerable latitude in the discussion of it; and

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*Preached at ordination of Rev. Stephen G. Dodd, at Milford, C.T. Oct. 20, 1852.

I claim the right to express my views freely on the subject, even at the risk of being thought censorious and fault-finding.

I. *Is there not a great and growing deficiency in that kind of preaching which this age of the world imperatively demands?* I am among the number who believe, unpopular as the doctrine is in many quarters, that the evangelical Pulpit has undergone, and is now undergoing, a serious and important *change*—a change on the whole for the worse, and truly alarming. In many respects it as unquestionably *improved.* There is less stiffness and dryness: less regard shown for human authority; less of the technicality and formula of the schools. There is more freedom and directness and boldness; there is a truer philosophy in many quarters, and often a better theology: a more popular and therefore effective exhibition of truth: a new fraternizing of the ministry with the people, and of the gospel with the masses: a wider range of thought and of the principles of Christianity in their social relations. There is more unction more learning and literature a higher rhetoric and oratory in the Pulpit of the present day, probably, than in any previous age.

And yet, after admitting all this, and more, if you please, is it not true that the Pulpit has lost, and is daily losing, that *Scripture* character and *moral* power in which its real strength and saving efficiency mainly consist? There is more of human wisdom and might, but less of the simple word and power of God in it. What preaching has *gained* in the particulars I have named, has it not more than *lost* in Scriptural simplicity and plainness—in piety and spirituality—in a divine ambition and unction; in that straightforward, honest, earnest dealing with sinners' consciences, which characterized the preaching of a past generation? A worldly ambition has crept into the pulpit to a fearful extent; mere talent is worshipped. The pride of learning and genius, the pride of science and philosophy, and the pride of popular oratory is rampant: There is an effort at greatness, a straining at originality, a showy ambitious rhetoric, a display of human parts and accomplishments, in sad keeping with the spirit and end of the gospel. There is, it cannot be denied, a great, a growing, and an alarming deficiency in that preaching which is a simple exhibition of God's Word. It is only necessary for a man of intelligence to put himself in a favourable position to observe and mark the flow of the popular current on this subject, especially as it is seen in our great cities and centres of influence, to see and feel the truth of this remark.

Compare the *published sermons* of the present day with the sermons of the old divines, and what a contrast; There is more of the spirit and power of the Bible in a single volume of Luther, or Baxter, or Edwards, than in a hundred of our day.

Let any one examine the twenty-six volumes of the "*American National Preacher.*" Here are about seven hundred sermons from distinguished ministers of the various evangelical denominations in this country, which may be taken as a fair exhibition of the American Pulpit for more than a quarter of a century. One thing will strike the mind with painful surprise, on a careful examination of the work, viz., the manifest falling off in what may be called Bible preaching. The "Preacher" holds its own, it may be, as to talent, learning, literature, accomplishment —in all that constitutes the intellectual and the esthetic—but, alas ! in deep piety and spirituality, in an earnest pleading with sinners, in moral power, as to the marrow and fatness of the gospel, one is constrained to say, "O the leanness, the leanness !" It does one's soul good to read the sermons in the earlier volumes from the pens of Mason, Green, Griffin, Alexander, Beecher, Rice, Skinner, Woods, Porter, Hyde, Dickinson, Spring, Humphrey, Fiske, Clarke, and Miller, and others like them, who then gave tone and power to our pulpit. There is an affluence of Scripture thought, language and illustration, a depth of Christian experience, a divine unction, a power of appeal, a grappling with the conscience, a masterly exhibition and application of the simple Word of God, that will move any man and stir the soul within him. And the successive *Conductors* of that highly useful work all complain of the difficulty of getting sermons of a Scriptural or practical character. While it were easy to obtain what are termed in the popular language of the times, "talented" sermons, "brilliant" sermons, "original" sermons, "learned and elaborate" sermons, "finished and polished" sermons, in any quantity, it is almost impossible to draw forth sermons so imbued with the spirit, and power of the Bible as to be likely to convert souls, and feed and nourish a Scripture piety in the church. Either such sermons are not commonly preached now a days, or their authors have no confidence in them, and are ashamed to print them. There are some *noble exceptions* to this remark, and, what is a significant fact, they belong mainly to the *older* portion of the ministry. The change I speak of is more marked and common among our *younger* brethren, showing a serious defect either in their theological training, or in the models after which their pulpit taste and style have been formed.

Not long since, a godly and able minister said to a brother, "O that my pastor would give us something beside pretty flowers, and brilliant periods, and intellectual treats, and lofty flights of eloquence ; my soul is famishing for the bread of life— I long for something simple, nourishing, substantial." And yet that pastor occupies a very distinguished place among our younger preachers, and is the model after which not a few of them are seeking to form their own preaching.

This class of facts, and I apprehend the observation of you all will confirm and add to it, goes to show that there is a lamentable deficiency in that kind of preaching which commends itself to men's consciences, and which alone God honours in the salvation of souls. God has never honoured *mere* talent and learning and rhetoric and logic and accomplishment—however distinguished, in his ministers. "*Not by might*" of human strength and display, "*nor by power*" of worldly wisdom and gifts, "*but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.*" The most gifted and popular ministry may be utterly barren of the "fruits of the Spirit." And are we not cursed with a curse—are not revivals of religion growing less and less frequent and general—are not pride and ambition and worldliness and the love of display and the spirit of unholy rivalry and dissension, creeping into the ministry and into all our churches, as, in part at least, the result of the deficiency here complained of? Is not this one of the main causes of that sad declension of religion over which we are called to mourn? May not this be the reason why the evangelical Pulpit of our day has so little power with the world?

I do know that there are not a few laymen in our churches, and, among the number, many distinguished for their intelligence standing and worth, who grieve over this defect, and feel and do not hesitate to declare that the popular style of preaching is not to their taste; does not profit them; and who long for a more simple preaching of the Word of God. *Daniel Webster* expressed the feelings of thousands like him, in the church and out of it, when he said, in a criticism on a learned and able discourse to which he had listened, "If clergymen in our day would return to the simplicity of the gospel, and preach more to individuals and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of true religion. Many of the ministers of the present day take their text from from St. Paul and preach from the newspapers. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts rather than listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, 'You are *mortal*; your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are *immortal* too. You are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge standeth before the door.' When I am thus admonished, I have no disposition to muse or to sleep." The rebuke is deserved; would that we all might heed and profit by it!

It were not difficult to *account* for the change which has come over the pulpit in our day; the fault is in the *times* more than in the ministry. We live in a *new* age of the world. Twenty-five years have given birth to immense changes. We are flooded with new ideas. The boundaries of knowledge are greatly enlarged. A powerful impulse has been given to the human mind. Mankind have cut loose from old notions. New tastes and habits and forms of life have come into being. The sober and the real, the contemplative, the substantial and the supernatural, are displaced by the ideal, the excitable, the impulsive the showy, the fanciful, the natural and sensual. The life of man as a social being and a creature of earthly instincts and interests and duties, has been immensely quickened and augmented. And it is not wonderful in such a day, that God's own Book of moral and eternal truths, unchangeable, supernatural, and spiritual from their nature—bodied forth to man in the language and forms of ancient modes of thought and life, and appealing only to the inner soul of man, should in a measure be despised and neglected. It is not strange that the *ministry*, seeing this, and themselves experiencing the baptism of this new dispensation, should often essay to fight this modern Goliath of awakened thought, of social change, of intellectual error, or religious indifference, with "*carnal weapons*"—the weapons of human wisdom and might—instead of "the simple sling and stones" out of the brook. But depend upon it, my brethren, we cannot cope successfully with the present race of giants with their own weapons. We cannot, in our calling, measure our strength with the world and prosper. Time was, when learning and science and the arts and oratory were confined to the sanctury, almost to the ministry. Then they were means of influence and of ascendency. But that day is past, and a new order of things exists. We can no longer excel in these things. We cannot cope with the professor's chair, with the lecture-room, with the secular press, even on this field. We have not the time nor the opportunity for it. We must arm ourselves with *other* weapons or we shall certainly lose ground. Our strength and sufficiency are in God alone, and in his inspired Word. Our lever is a *moral* one, having its fulcrum deep down in the human conscience; and the only effectual power we can apply to that lever is the simple authoritative Word of the living God. If ever there was an age of the world that demanded to have the voice of God, speaking to man in the volume of inspiration. sounded out with clearness and with emphasis—an age demanding simple faith in God's all-sufficiency, in the power of supernatural Truth, eminent holiness and a special baptism of the Holy Ghost, in those who exercise ths Gospel Ministry, that age is certainly the present.

II. I have already more than hinted at the kind of preaching demanded by the times. I mean what may be distinctively called BIBLE PREACHING. If asked to define this term I might be unable to do it definitely and precisely. I mean more by it than simple exposition or the use of scripture language, or doctrinal preaching. Four remarks will pretty clearly indicate what I understand by Bible Preaching.

1. *The Holy Scriptures must obviously* UNDERLIE *all our teaching* They are the sole basis of our ministry. They are the substratum, and they are to furnish the entire subject matter of our sermons. We are not at liberty to go beyond the record—

to introduce topics foreign to it—or to launch out into the wide and uncertain field of speculation. We are to ground every sermon upon the plain import of God's revealed Word. God has put his own inspired Scriptures into our hands "which are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ;" and it is our simple duty to explain, defend and enforce the teachings of these Divine Scriptures. And this foundation certainly is broad enough, and the topics and materials which the Scriptures furnish are varied and ample enough to occupy fully and exhaust the most capacious and well-furnished mind, so that we are without excuse in neglecting the Scriptures.

All this, I suppose, is readily admitted. And yet how much of the preaching of the day will not bear this test. How many sermons are preached that are entirely independent of the Bible in their cast and spirit, language and reasoning. Topics are introduced into the pulpit—matters of mere opinion and speculation are discussed—fields of thought and inquiry are traversed—well enough in their place, but as foreign to the main scope of the Scriptures and the salvation of sinners, as if Shakspeare, or Coleridge, or La Place were the text-book! Such preaching may attract admiring crowds, but it will not carry home conviction to the hearts of sinners and convert them from the error of their ways.

2. *The Bible must be our decisive* AUTHORITY *in all our teaching.* And that authority must be constantly acknowledged, made prominent, and appealed to as the sole warrant and power of our ministry. All the independent opinions and reasonings of men have but little weight in matters of religion. One text of Scripture directly to the point, is worth more than volumes of traditions, commentaries, speculations, however learned and ingenious, and authorities. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "To the law and the testimony;" if they are not made to bear out clearly our teaching—made the high court of appeal in all matters of doctrine and duty—if we do not show perfect *confidence* in the Bible and make the simple authority of God the right arm of our strength, our ministry will be essentially wanting; it will fail to convict and convert men.

The Bible, remember, *assumes* many things; and its simple statement of facts, doctrines and duty not only authoritatively settles the points involved which claim our attention, but after we have tried upon them all our ingenuity, learning and philosophy, we shall be no wiser than God's own Word makes us. How much preaching is thrown away, which, not satisfied with a "thus saith the Lord,"—with receiving the truth as matter of faith from the Word of God—seeks to reason it all out and make it matter of intellectual demonstration! I do believe that preaching loses immensely by coming down from the high vantage-ground of *inspired truth* to deal with the Bible much as we would deal with any other book. It is wonderful how the heart of man responds to the simple Word of God—responds though that word be mainly a matter of faith and of conscience; and nothing can compensate for keeping that word in the back-ground, or making it subordinate.

This is one of the *essential* elements of Bible preaching; and so undeniably much of the preaching of the times is lamentably wanting in it. I fear there is a wide-spread and growing deficiency just on this fundamental point. How much of it is attributable to lax views in regard to the *inspiration of all Scripture*—or to the introduction of *German* theology and literature into our country—or to a desire to adapt preaching to the peculiar spirit and genius of the age—I am not able to say. That a decided and extensive *change* has come over the pulpit in this respect during a single generation, must be apparent to all who have had any opportunity for observing. The *spirit* if not the principles of *Rationalism* and *Naturalism* is fast gaining ground among us. What is meant by this remark is simply, a tendency to look at man and the system of salvation from other stand-points than the stand-point of divinely inspired and revealed truth. It was among the very last services which *Professor Stuart* rendered to the church to pen a most emphatic and solemn warning to his brethren on this very point. Never more than now was there wanted a ministry rooted and grounded in their convictions of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and disposed to honour and insist upon the authority of the Scriptures as absolute and sufficient, and above suspicion.

3. *Bible preaching* must of course be *the preaching of the* BIBLE *itself*. Not only must the Bible be the *groundwork* of it, and the *authority* to enforce it, but the *staple* of it also, the sum and substance of it. Our simple business is to unfold and vindicate, enforce and apply the meaning or truths of the *Bible*. We are to set forth the facts, doctrines, principles, and life of the Divine Word, in all their fulness, and seek to give them their practical effect in their varied relations. In doing this we may use our own language or Bible language—adopt the topical or textual mode of preaching—the expository or sermonic form—preach from one text or ten—follow the order of books, or go as judgment and the Spirit of God may guide us. All this relates to the manner and is subordinate. The great thing is to get the meaning, the teaching, and the spirit of God's own Book fairly and forcibly before the minds, and into the hearts, and down upon the consciences of our hearers.

No one it is supposed really doubts this And yet, brethren, it is no easy thing to preach thus;—it is not the popular way of preaching in these times. The pressure of great and manifold temptations is constantly upon us to preach quite "another gospel"—a gospel of philosophy, and literature, and rhetoric—or a gospel of mere social reforms, and humanitarian notions, and transcendental affinities—in order to meet the wants, or keep pace with the supposed progress of the age. Is it not an alarming fact that doctrinal, expository, and even textual preaching has well nigh ceased from our pulpit? The good old practice of quoting Scripture freely from the Pulpit has nearly passed away. There are more frequent quotations from the Poets and the Classics in multitudes of modern sermons, than from the Law and the Prophets and the Gospels! Indeed, such is the cast, the level, the genius of not a small portion of our present preaching that the plain and simple, the sober and matter-of-fact language and sentiment of the Bible, would be *quite out of place* in it—would be thought tame and common-place, and would offend fastidious ears. I do believe that the ministry of our day are greatly at fault here. I do fear, brethren, that we yield too much to the demands of this polite, fastidious, esthetic, and would-be-thought highly cultivated and philosophic age. I do think that our sermons have come to partake too much of the popular *Lecture*, and the *Essay* form, and that we need to come back to primitive models—to that preaching which is "eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures." THE BIBLE, THE WHOLE BIBLE, AND NOTHING BUT THE BIBLE—oh, if this were the motto of all who exercise the gospel ministry, the Bible would not so often to fail prove the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. But how many are mere philosophers, or lecturers, or essayists, or poetizers, or declaimers in the pulpit, where Christ and his cross are the only fitting theme, and where the words of truth and soberness only become the dying lips which speak to dying souls. The late DR. ERSKINE MASON—himself with all his erudition and his philosophic mind a beautiful exemplification of the sentiment, once made this pregnant and instructive remark: Brethren, be as much of the *philosopher* as you please in your *study*, but in the *pulpit*, never."

4. Finally, Bible preaching must embrace the exhibition of *the spirit and divine life of the Scriptures.* The letter killeth, while the spirit maketh alive. Not only must our preaching be grounded in the Scriptures, and enforced by their authority, and fairly drawn from them, but it must take its peculiar inspiration and moral character from them. A man must himself drink into the spirit of the Bible—enter its inmost sanctuary—understand it both experimentally and critically and have his intellectual and spiritual being in the Bible—must experience the power of God in his soul, and know the positive experimental side of Christianity—he must love to study and pry into the Bible, and dwell in that world of spiritual light and wonders, before he can truly and effectively *preach* the Bible. And the more intelligent piety there is in the preacher—the more familiar he is with the inner life of the Scriptures—and the more he comes under the baptism of that same Holy Spirit which indites and dwells in the Word, the more truly and powerfully will he be likely to preach it.

And here again, I am constrained to believe, there is manifest deficiency extensively and increasingly prevalent in the ministry. While the labors of modern scholars have shed much new and important light on the literature of the Bible and secured, in some instances, a better rendering and interpretation of the text, still, I think it will be admitted, that there is a sad declension of the *evangelical spirit*, a loss in the items of real piety and experimental preaching. The Pulpit of our times —times, too, demanding *eminent* spirituality and holiness in the ministry—is far from being as thoroughly evangelical, as decided and deep-toned in its piety, as spiritual and experimental in its ministrations, or as fully imbued with the life-giving spirit of a positive Christianity and of the Holy Ghost, as it should be! This is doubtless our great deficiency and besetting sin We have not enough of the spirit of Christ and of Paul for such evil times as these.

This is our idea of Bible preaching. The Bible, as God's inspired and supernatural revelation, must *underlie* it, must give *authority* to it, must be the *theme* and *matter* of it, must give *inspiration* and *power* to it. Preaching must be of this kind and every sermon after this model, or it is not Bible preaching or a gospel sermon, whatever else it may be.

It were not difficult to name *examples* of such a stamp o preaching. From the specimens we have of *Christ's* preaching it was eminently characterized by the qualities which have bee named. He preached strait at the hearts and consciences o his hearers, in language, simple, pointed, and authoritative He aimed to impress them with the fact of their individua responsibility to God—to convict them of sin, and make them tremble in view of it, and of a coming judgment, So *Pete* preached on the day of Pentecost. Every word of that famou sermon was like a barbed arrow to pierce and rankle in th conscience. So *Paul* preached. Profoundly erudite and accomplished as he was, he would know nothing at Jerusalem, o Rome, or Athens, or Corinth, or Antioch, but "Christ, and him crucified." We all know how *Baxter* preached, and what i was that made his preaching so powerful. It was his plain honest, fearless, direct, faithful, intense application of God's ow authoritative Word to men's consciences. Look, too, at th sermons of the great *Edwards*. It was not his masterly meta physics, his profound philosophy, his intellectual demonstrations or his parade of learning, that made him such a giant in th pulpit ;—there is a singular absence of these in his sermons But he got strait down upon the sinner's *conscience*, and then dealt his earnest blows with almost superhuman effect. In hi sermon on the *Judgment Day*, we are told, that he so impresse upon his hearers the sense of personal guilt and interest in it decisions that when he closed, they actually looked up in terro to see if the heavens were not actually rending, and the incensed God descending to take vengeance on his enemies. That famous sermon of his, which produced such an overwhelming effect at the time of its delivery—"*Sinners in the hands of an angry God*"—what is there in it but the simple unfolding of Scripture truth on that awful subject, and a direct, solemn, pungent, and intensely energetic application of it to his immediate hearers? O, for the day when *such* preaching shall again thunder from our pulpits, causing sinners in Zion to be afraid, and waking a slumbering conscience of a guilty world!

Let me, my brother, commend to you such models. Let your ministry be thoroughly pervaded and imbued with the light and spirit of the Bible. Make the Bible, not only your text-book, but the staple and the inspiration of all your sermons. Honour it, and God will honour your ministry. Baptize your soul with the spirit of it, and God will baptize your teaching with the Holy Ghost.

The Bible is a wonderful book. There is nothing like it in the world. It is full of the great thoughts of God. It is crowded with topics of infinite interest and importance to mankind. All here is *Truth*, certain, revealed, inspired Truth. Here are all the elements of greatness, of moral influence and power. Your business is with this Book alone. Gods puts this Book into your hands with the solemn charge to preach it, and, so to preach it, that you shall not be guilty of the blood of souls. It is responsible business, a fearful charge, this ministry which you take upon you to-day. Hundreds of souls, guilty and immortal, will hang on your lips from Sabbath to Sabbath. Your ministry will be one of life or death eternal to not a few. Every Sabbath you are to stand forth and proclaim those great and weighty truths which are herein set forth. And quickly you will stand with the people who this day open their hearts and arms to receive you as their minister at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Resolve, brother, to be a *Bible* preacher. Take your stand on the high vantage-ground of the Bible, and never come down from it. Thence survey the field of your labor, your work, your account, your reward. Look upon your hearers in the light of its affecting truths. Aim steadily and constantly at the saving of souls; no inferior end is worth the toils and sacrifices of the ministry. Fill your sermons with the facts, the doctrines, the principles, the examples of this blessed book, clearly set forth, and earnestly and prayerfully enforced, and your mimistry here will be full of glorious results. Admiring crowds may not gather to it—the land may not ring with the fame of it—but, what is infinitely better, the sigh of the awakened, the cry of the anxious, the tear of the penitent, and the song of the convert shall be your reward.

And this is the kind of ministry, my friends, which *you ought to desire and pray for.* If it be not so popular with the age and the multitude as some other, it is the only kind of ministry that i worth the having. You need to be instructed, warned and admonished out of the Scriptures. You need to hear the voice o God your Maker and Sovereign and Redeemer and Judge, soundin out from his Word every Sabbath, clear emphatic, and authoritative. You do not want to be amused or entertained, but converted sanctified, and saved—taught how to live and to die. Be satisfie with a Bible ministry and with nothing else. Desire it abov riches, above all earthly rewards. Let your minister see that yo appreciate a ministry in full sympathy with the Bible, in its aim spirit, and teachings.

GOD'S PRUNING-HOOKS.

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Another of God's instruments of purgation is *providential trial* "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every so whom he receiveth." These chastisements may come in the shap of persecutions, or bodily sufferings, or mental anguish, or loss o property, or disappointment as to worldly prospects, or sickness an death of dear friends, or the ill-doings of near connections, or i some other way. No matter what is the form or shape of the pruninghook. It is just as the Good Husbandman has seen fit to make i and just the shape that is suited to our particular case. "Th Lord knoweth them that are his," and therefore will not prune th wrong branch. It often seems to short sighted mortals, that th Lord sometimes makes mistakes, in using his pruning-hooks. W would hold back his hand, and ask, "Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?" The branch seems so stripped of its foliage that w are ready to say, "It cannot survive such severe pruning." Bu as we look back upon branches, which were thus pruned in ol times, we find that they did survive. They not only survived, bu were the more flourishing and fruitful in consequence of their having been thus dealt with. This was the case with the ancien patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job and Moses. Thi was the case with all the pious prophets and kings. "One o them says. "It is good for me that I have been afflicted Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kep thy word." The apostles found it good to suffer affliction One of them speaks thus, "Now, no chastening for th present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who ar exercised thereby." "For our light affliction, which is but for moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eterna weight of glory." In God's wise arrangement, it is "throug much tribulation" that true Christians enter the kingdom o heaven.—*N. Y. Evangelist.*

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SERMON DCV.

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FACE TO FACE.

> "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."—2 JOHN, 12.

How many things have I had to write to you in that long year of absence now mercifully closed! Things relating to my own personal welfare, which you have regarded in thought and in prayer with an interest so kind and so constant; things relating to their prosperity, upon which I have dwelt continually in thought and in prayer; things of God's providence and grace, as illustrated in the new and varied experiences of the year, in the observation of different countries and nations, in the fulfilment of prophecy, and in the daily confirmation of the Scriptures in the land where they were written; things for thanksgiving, for exhortation, for admonition, for edification in knowledge and in holiness, how many such things have I had to write to you, when other occupations claimed the hour, or when for very weariness the pen refused its office. At such times I have said, "I will not write with paper and ink, but will leave all these lessons and teachings of the year to be uttered by word of mouth;" for I trusted, always, that through a gracious Providence, I would come to you again, and speak face to face. Yet, now that I have come, and do speak face to face, I cannot speak at all of the many things I had to write by reason of the fulness of joy in once more meeting with you and speaking to you. All the many things that so crowded the mind and labored for utterance when oceans and continents intervened, and there was no medium of communication but paper and ink, have for the moment vanished into oblivion. In this first ecsetacy of speaking face to face, the liberated tongue demands other and fresher themes than those which have occupied the mind during the wandering exile of a year. As the traveler returning to the bosom of his family, would enjoy awhile the faces of his wife and children, and indulge the feeling that he is at home, before he entertains them with his own adventures and experience so would I, as a pastor, enjoy the social feeling of a re-union with Christian friends, forgetful of the observations and experiences hoarded up even for their benefit during a long and trying absence. Those many things will, doubtless, come up again in their proper time and place; enough that now through the good Providence of God, I have come to you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

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* Preached in the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, on the occasion of his return from a tour of fourteen months in the East.

This very circumstance suggests the theme of my discourse : viz: Personal and social communion among Christians, necessary to the completeness of their joy.

The social feeling is a vital element of our nature, and fit society is indispensable to the perfection of happiness. Indeed it would seem that this is necessary not only for beings constituted and related as we are, but for every intelligent being. There is society among the angels of heaven; there is society in the being of God himself.

It may help us to understand the mystery of the Trinity if we regard this philosophical law of being in its application to the Infinite mind. I would not say that the triune existence of Jehovah, as revealed to us in the Scriptures, is the necessary mode of Divine existence, but I do believe that it is the mode in which God has existed from eternity, and not merely a special manifestation of himself for the work of man's redemption. I cannot see how, without some such mode of existence, the divine Being could have been happy, before the creation of angels and men. God is love. But love requires an object commensurate and responsive : something worthy of it, and that can answer to it. This is necessary, in order that he who loves may find his own perfect happiness in that love. We may, indeed, love unworthy and inferior objects, or objects that do not reciprocate our affection; and in the feeling of benevolence towards these we may find happiness as compared with a state of indifference, or with the opposite feeling. But to know the full joy of love we must have an object commensurate with our capacity for loving; something that can worthily claim our whole heart, and that can and does respond to our affection. If, therefore, God did not exist in distinct persons capable of mutual love, then in all the eternity that passed before the creation there was absolutely nothing that God could love. But without love, it is not possible that the happiness of a moral being could be complete. Mere existence does not bring to such being the fulness of joy—mere intelligence or power does not complete his happiness. He demands something more, and that is the exercise and the satisfaction of his moral nature in love. Now, to deny the Trinity in the Godhead, is to deny to God any object of love, any source of happiness in that long, long period when there was no creation to employ his thoughts and to fill his affections; it is to leave the infinite mind whose very life is love, without love, and therefore without life, for want of an object to call it forth. But the existence of the Supreme Being in three persons, relieves this difficulty. For what infinite joy must there ever have been in the communion of the three persons in the Godhead, one in substance, in thought, and in action, equal in power and glory, reflecting each the other's love, and speaking face to face. Hence the wonderful depth and fulness of the declarations of the Father respecting the Son, "My beloved Son; my well-beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased; in whom my soul delighteth;" and hence, also, the longing of the Son to be again with the Father in the glory which he had with him before the world was. There is society in the divine Being—the mysterious, the transcendent fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Ghost—these three in one, perfect in love, speaking face to face, and ever abiding in the fulness of joy.

There is society among the angels of heaven. These were not created mute and solitary. Their worship is a social worship. The Seraphim that surround the throne are not silent emblems of the glory of the Lord; they are living creatures, with intelligence, with affections, with social feelings:—they cry one to another, stimulating each other "to yet loftier praise—they cry one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." Their song is a unison, or a chorus; they are "an innumerable company;" seldom do they go forth on solitary errands, but in chosen pairs or in glittering hosts do they visit the earth upon errands of judgment or of mercy.

Conceive of the creation of one solitary being to occupy the vast physical universe. He finds himself surrounded with the grandeur and the ever-varying beauty of the material creation. From the minutest atom to the sublimest orb, all is open to his inspection. His faculties are not limited by a dependence upon physical senses, but with a spiritual intuition he discerns the most subtle laws of nature, and traces each fact and movement to its remotest cause. Yet, notwithstanding this quick perception of material phenomena, so vast is their number, and so endless their variety, that his mind may find unceasing and untiring employment upon the works of the Creator, and the attributes of God than these display. To him is given the highest range of knowledge, and the highest intellectual pleasure possible to a created, and a finite mind. Moreover, by introspection he learns the laws of his own being; he studies mind, its nature, its capacities, its exercises, its affections—all its intricate and mysterious phenomena; he finds within himself a spiritual world as vast and as inexhaustible as the material world around him—a world that can enfold within its thought the whole material creation, as the chrystalized glass enfolds the curious forms of the artist—trees, plants, flowers, birds, animals, earth, sea and sky, all forms and combinations of material things held within the chrystal, and seen through it as through a lens; and in this pure spiritual world, also, as in a mirror, perceiving the face and the glory of his Maker, he rejoices in himself as the image of God.

Moreover, it is given to this being to hold intercourse with his Maker; not merely to render homage, but to approach with filial confidence the throne of Infinite Majesty; to give and to receive love; and in that love to find peace and joy unbounded and eternal. He, the sole offspring of God, may tread as a son his Father's courts; may know, as a son, his father's counsels; may share, as a son, his father's delights; yet must this intercourse be reverential, and, in part, reserved, the approach of the inferior to the superior, of the subject, though a son, to the Sovereign, though a father, the approach of the finite to the infinite. The society of the creature with the Creator, cannot be like the society of the persons of the Godhead; the creature cannot fathom the thoughts of the Creator, much less can he enter into his counsels as an equal. It is his only to receive, to acknowledge, to love and to adore. His happiness is the highest possible to his condition, but not the highest of which we can conceive. When enraptured with the beauties of the physical creation he exclaims, "How beautiful, how sublime," he meets at most an echo to the outward ear, not a response to the inward soul. When looking upward with adoring love, he cries, "How glorious Thou;" though he meet an approving smile, he feels no sympathetic chord vibrating in unison with the innermost fibres of his being, thus stirred at the presence or the thought of God. Communion with God he may enjoy; but for that simpler heart-fellowship that his nature craves, he is alone in the wide universe. Sympathy, companionship he has none; and wanting these, he wants also the fulness of joy.

A solitary being thus created in the heaven of thought, would be like a solitary star in the material heaven, which, though pure and radiant as the eye of God himself, would yet wander on in the blackness of darkness forever. But add to this another and another, and as light answers to light, the scene is already brightened, and the responsive rays break the solitude of universal gloom. Add now to these a glittering host, and while darkness vanishes, the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy. Thus it is in heaven. There is no solitary praise, no single lyre; but one grand unison or oft-recurring chorus, Cherubim and Seraphim, telling their raptures, answer each other face to face.

When the first man was placed in Eden, he was not wholly without society. Angels were his ministers. These elder ranks of the creation assisted this their younger brother with their instructions, and cheered him with their songs. But more especially did his Maker condescend to become his companion; and in the cool of the day the Lord God would appear to Adam under some visible form—resplendent yet supportable by his unfallen vision; would walk with him in the garden, and talk with him as a father with a child. Yet his Maker knew that there was a great void in the life of this infant creature; that an element of his being, essential to the completeness of his happiness, was not satisfied by anything in his surrounding circumstances. It was not enough that, made a little lower than the angels, the head of the whole animal creation, and holding daily fellowship with his Maker, he was placed in a garden of perfect beauty, to dress and to keep it, and as the vicegerent of heaven, was commissioned to have dominion over the new world. It was not enough that his whole sentient nature was gratified, that all his powers of intellect were employed, and that his moral being was developed to the utmost, under the immediate tuition of Jehovah; his social nature was not satisfied; his sympathies as a man were not met; his soul found no responsive element in the whole creation amid which he dwelt; for he had not there one equal companion. He could hold no communion with the animal world; and his intercourse with angels, and much more with God himself, was that of the younger with the elder, of the inferior with the superior; wanting in the element of sympathy, of a full correspondence which gives its charm to the society of equals.

Therefore the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him;" I will provide for him a companion suited to his nature and his wants; and he gave him such a companion, made like himself, made from himself, whom he could love as his own, whom he could converse with as his consort; not through such a media as had heretofore given him intercourse with the spirit-world—but face to face. What joy was added to our first father by this gift, is expressed by his own rapturous declaration of devotion to his Eve, and is thus happily rendered by the poet of the Paradise Lost and Regained:

"Thou hast fulfilled
Thy words, Creator bounteous and benign,
Giver of all things fair! but fairest this
Of all thy gifts."

And most fitly does the poet represent the joy of our first parents in each other as finding its highest expression in the united adoration of their Maker.

"When at their shady lodge arrived, both stood,
Both turned, and under open sky adored

The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heaven,
Which they beheld; the moon's resplendent globe,
And starry pole: Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker Omnipotent, and thou the day,
Which we, in our appointed work enjoy'd,
Have finished, happy in our mutual help,
And mutual love, the crown of all our bliss
Ordain'd by thee."

Man now enters upon his existence in the social state. However isolated the place of his birth, he is, nevertheless, ushered into the family, and is trained in the society of others. But the family—except in its first formation—is not constituted upon the principle of elective affinity. It is society, but not chosen society. God setteth the solitary in families; and this organization is designed at once to meet and to develope the social feeling in man. Yet the mere family relation does not do this in perfection. It is too much a necessary thing or a thing of course—there is too, little volition in it. Parents know why they love their children and delight in their society; and by and by children come to understand why they love or ought to love their parents, and why home is so much better than any other place on earth, and nothing so delightful as, after a season of separation, to see again father and mother face to face. When for a season, a family is scattered, letter-writing, however full and frequent, cannot sustain the interest or supply the want of home. However many things may be said with paper and ink, and however pleasant may be the notes of travel in each day's budget, it is reserved for the re-union—the speaking face to face—to complete the joy. Then what was written must be again told with a fresh interest. But not all families are thus happy; and sometimes one and another member of the family circle, is constrained to go outside of that circle in quest of the living social sympathy that every human heart instinctively craves. Brothers and sisters grow up loving each other, at first they know not why; until the development of character weaves some chord of elective affinity that draws them into a closer, fuller sympathy. Yet, in the course of years, it comes to pass that father and mother, brothers and sisters, and early home are all forsaken for a new love, wholly elective that alone can meet the inmost yearning of the soul, and in which all the experiences, the desires, the thoughts, the hopes, the aims of two sympathizing and congenial minds, guarded from all the world beside, are opened to each other, face to face.

Man is by nature social. A life of continuous solitude does violence to his individual constitution, and to the constitution of the world in which he lives. God places him in society from the first. But this family organization, with all its resources and adaptations for happiness, does not in our fallen state, meet all the wants and the capacities of man as a social being. In this alone he can find the fulness of joy.

Outside the family are other circles in whose society the nature of man finds in some respects the complement of itself. Yet these societies are often based upon interest, convenience, or some form of selfishness, and are governed by conventional laws. There is little heart-play in them. The speaking face to face is not always the expression or the occasion of joy. This itself is regulated too much by conventional forms or hampered by motives of interest. There are circles of friendship where the heart rules, and where each re-union is welcomed with a gush of joy; circles whose gathering is longed for by their members as a necessity of life, and in whose atmosphere all is sunshine and peace. No correspondence of the absent can impart to these the life of the present, nor can that life be fully communicated to any who do not participate in it face to face. But such circles are rare and limited. Seldom are they of unmixed purity and loveliness; and they change perpetually with the change of circumstnaces and the flight of years. There is no mere society, whether its bond be literature, congeniality, or friendship—however select, and however guarded, that can meet in its fullest, highest measure of the social element of the soul.

But though neither the family nor the ordinary arrangements of society can satisfy this feeling, it is met perfectly in that spiritual society composed of the children of God—the true disciples of Christ, and in the communion which these together enjoy. I speak not here of a mere fellowship in a Christian church, but of the society of true Christians; and of their social communion as the children of God, as distinguished from their private personal walk with God. This communion, I say, alone meets fully man's social nature, and this is necessary also for the completeness of Christian joy. Of course this spiritual communion does not meet those social feelings and sympathies that are specially adapted to the family. It is not a substitute for these. These still have their play. But this communion is added to all other forms of pure and lawful social intercourse, to the family circle, to the circle of business, of politics, of literature, of society, of innocent pleasure; it is added, I say, to these as the very highest type of social communion,—its only complete and perfect type; so as to become the one pure and perennial source of social joy. This you may see illustrated on this wise. Let there be a family in which is found the utmost purity, kindliness and mutual love possible without the presence of religion;—where all the charms of home are blended in the happy circle that never knows a jar. There seems to be between the several members of that family the fulness of joy in their daily intercourse and their every social sympathy.

Suppose now that two members of this family—a brother and a sister,—are awakened to a new spiritual life in Christ. Thenceforth they are drawn towards each other by a tie they never felt before, and stronger than any that hitherto has bound them. Each has become more lovely in the other's eyes; and each has fathomed more deeply the other's soul, and both have felt the power of that all-encircling love that shall hold them in its fulness through all eternity. And this is a tie, and this an experience in which they two are bound apart from all other members of the family. They are not selfish in their separation, they have abated none of their former love for the rest of the household; that love is the rather increased by the desire that these also should share in this new experience; but there has come into the bosom of this family, in the hearts of two of its members a new principle of life, that brings out emotions and sympathies before unknown to themselves; and far above all the delights of the family circle, the love of parents and children, of brothers and sisters, is the joy of these two regenerated souls—their joy in each other as they speak of their innermost experiences in language that they only can understand.

Such on a great scale is the joy of Christian communion to those who as the followers of Christ are separated from the rest of mankind. They have no selfish exclusiveness, no want of interest in the family at large; —rather, a deeper, livelier interest in its welfare than any other of its members;—they have no morbid distaste for such innocent pleasures as they have shared in common with the whole family; but they find in each other in their communion as Christians, a joy that far transcends all other joys, and in which those not spiritually renewed cannot sympathise or share.

This spiritual society is entered from choice. No one is born into it, or made a member of it by mere outward arrangements. . It is the society of believers. It is founded upon character; upon moral affinities: they who compose it are alike in their principles, desires, and aims, in their one grand object for the present life, and in their hope for the future. They are subjects of the same experience, have known the same deliverance as a prelude to the same joy. And in this is one of the strongest and most peculiar bonds of their sympathy; for, other circumstances being equal, they who have known a common trial, or have escaped a common danger, are ever drawn to each other more strongly than those who have known only the even tenor of joy.

Moreover, by their experience and their principles they are a separate society, and as such, are the more strongly welded together by the heat of the blows of opposition from without. They are united also in and through one common head, and by the love they bear to Him are strengthed and enlivened in their mutual love; and they are looking onward to one blessed and eternal home in all the fulness of joy. How could it be then, but that these persons should be held together by the strongest ties, and should find in communion with each other the fullest satisfaction of their social wants.

I say in communion with each other. Imagine but two Christians upon the earth, and these separated by its diameter. Each lives in the enjoyment of communion with God, but each is solitary. He knows not of one sympathizing heart in all the world. By and by these two isolated Christians come to the knowledge of each other's existence; and by correspondence each learns the views and feelings of the other. What a thrill of joy is given by this discovery—and how does each letter, with its fresh expressions of sympathy and its developments of character, draw them together in bonds of love. And yet how imperfect is their communion,—how incomplete their joy. How does each long to know the person that addresses him as a brother, to grasp his hand, to look him in the eye, to hear his voice, and in return to tell him all the heart. Now bring together these two isolated brethren; let them see each other in the flesh as they have known each other through mechanical instruments. How do their hearts bound, how do their eyes overflow with joy as they speak face to face; nay, even if through emotion or want of language they cannot speak at all, what a blessed heart-union do they now feel.

The venerable apostle John had great joy in the elect lady and her children to whom he addressed this brief epistle: he knew them well; perhaps had seen them recently; he could write them now, but he felt that to speak to them face to face was necessary to his full enjoyment in them as disciples of Christ. With what joy have I looked in the face those missionaries in distant lands whose names and labors I long had known; how sweet was their near fellowship in a strange land; but now that I have come again to you and speak face to face my joy once more is full.

This view of the necessity of Christian communion to the perfection of religious joy teaches us that a monkish seclusion from the world is contrary to the whole genius of the Gospel.

One of the earliest and most fatal perversions of Christianity was the notion borrowed from the asceticism and seclusiveness of certain old heathen priesthoods, that piety is to be best cultivated in a state of entire seclusion from mankind, amid the solitude and privations of the hermit's cell. The extent of this perversion in the early ages of the church seems almost incredible to us in an age when there is hardly a nook or corner of the world left for solitude. But all along the brook of Kedron from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, all along the valley of the Nile from the capital of Egypt to the confines of Nubia, in the fastnesses of the mountains that skirt the Jordan and those also that lift their naked grandeur in the peninsula of Sinai and the deserts of Arabia, you will find cells hewn in the rock or formed from natural caverns that were once the resort of the saints and fathers of the Christian church. Many of these anchorites became such in the first instance by reason of persecution; but by degrees a monkish seclusion was advocated and extolled as the highest type of piety, and thus grew up a system which to this day is the incubus and the curse of all the nominal churches of the East. When Christianity retired to the cell she lost her hold upon society, because a thing exterior to society instead of a vital force within it; and thus arose, instead of a simple faith in Christ, a reverence for saints, and instead of the example and influence of living teachers of the Gospel, the spiritual domination of a privileged class esteemed the favorites of heaven; thus arose by degrees the debasing superstition, the frivolous ceremonialism and the spiritual despotism that crippled and well nigh destroyed the church of Christ.

The same tendency is seen in certain branches or schools in the church at this day, and in the writings of those Quietists and Pietists who emulate St. Jerome and St. Anthony. But no view of Christianity is more important than that which regards it as a social system, adapted to man as God has constituted and conditioned him in this world, a member of the family, of society, and of the state. While the Gospel deals with men not organically but individually or personally, and would first of all bring each individual soul into fit relations with its maker, it yet comes to men not as isolated but as social beings—who by their very constitution need a social as well as a private religious life to develope all their nature, and to perfect their joy. Piety can be cultivated and maintained only by personal communion with God; but the condition most favorable to its development is not a seclusion from the world that does violence to man's social nature.

> "We need not bid, for cloistered cell,
> Our neighbor and our work farewell,
> Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
> For sinful man beneath the sky.
> The trivial round, the common task,
> Would furnish all we ought to ask;
> Room to deny ourselves, a road
> To bring us, daily, nearer God."

This view of Christian communion suggests the wisdom and the desirableness of those ordinances and arrangements that are designed to facilitate that communion.

Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together." No one can maintain an earnest piety who wilfully and habitually neglects the social worship of God.

In a case of the necessary privation of social worship, as often at sea, to a person shut up in prison, there may be the most lively flame of piety burning in seclusion. But the ordinary traveller knows that the loss the prayer meeting and the Sabbath day worship to which he has been accustomed, is the loss of a positive good which he cannot long sustain without detrement to his piety. He, then, who wilfully neglects [illegible] means of grace must fall into a state of spiritual decay. If he forsakes assembly of the saints, so that he does not know his brethren "fac face," it may be questioned whether he knows Christ, and whether Christ will know him as one of his disciples in the last day.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Christian communion, of fellowship in the commemoration of his death, as distinguished from the sacrifice of the mass, in which the priest officiates apart from the people.

Finally. This view of Christian communion suggests delightful anticipations of the blessedness of heaven.

Our joy here is not complete, because our circle is not complete. After a year's absence I see you face to face; but I see not all who once were here. The seats that were vacant when I left are vacaant still, and others are vacant also; and a place in the heart is vacant because of these. My feet have trod the streets of Jerusalem; I have walked about Zion, and have counted her desolate towers, and have returned to tell you, not of her glory, but of her degradation. But they who have gone to the New Jerusalem, come not back to tell us of its glory. Once safely over this life's treacherous ocean, they essay it not again, not even to grasp the hand or soothe the bleeding heart of love. Rather, they come not again in the body—they are no longer visible to these mortal eyes Yet may we still believe them present, and even to-day partakers in our joy.

> " O soothe us, haunt us, night and day,
> Ye gentle spirits far away,
> With whom we shared the cup of grace,
> Then parted ; ye to Chris's embrace,
> We to the lonesome world again,
> Yet mindful of the unearthly strain
> Practiced with you at Eden's door,
> To be sung on where Angels soar,
> With blended voices evermore."

Oh ! welcome the day when we shall again with them take-up that strain within the heavenly city ; when, face to face with those we here have cherished, we shall recount the loves, the joys, the cares, the griefs, the toils and dangers of the way, until at length we lose all these and lose ourselves in the fulness of eternal joy.

Heaven is a family. We shall yet see all its members, and know them face to face. Who does not find in this prospect an added element of joy? could not be content always to know the patriarchs and prophets as mere historic personages. It is not enough that I have pitched my tent upon the plains of Mamre, and held invisible communion with the Father of the Faithful ; I must see Abraham, the Friend of God. It is not enough that I have pillowed my head at Bethel, where Jacob found his bed of stones transmuted into downy ether, tinged with gold ; " I must climb the ladder that he saw, and see him who, by resolute, persistent prayer overcame Omnipotence. It is not enough that I have stood upon the top of Sinai, and have there read the law given to Mo-sea; I must yet see the man who, on that mount, amid thunder, lightning, and earthquake, and tempest, stood unmoved, and talked w Jehovah as friend with friend. It is not enough that I have followed Shepherd king from Bethlehem to Hebron and from Hebron to Mo Zion; I must yet see the royal minstrel, whose harp has swayed my most soul. It is not enough that from the house-top of Joppa, I h looked as did Peter upon the vineyards and the olive-groves, and th deep blue sea, and that other overhanging sea that makes the Para of eastern climes; or that at Damascus I have sought out the scenes Paul's conversion and instruction; I must yet see the apostles of th circumcision and the uncircumcision, whose conversation I would low. More than all, most of all, it is not enough that I have walk the very footsteps of Him who made Palestine the Holy Land, that Bethlehem to Nazareth, from Nazareth to the Jordan, to the Lake Tiberias, through all Galilee and Jewry, I have literally followed that I have lingered beside the brook Kedron, in the garden of Geth ane, and on the Mount of Olives, till the cross and the crown b palpable realities; I must yet see him face to face.

We see him now here, in these speaking symbols; we grasp him living faith, till he becomes a personal presence; but this cannot Oh, glorious anticipation of a nearer communion. Oh, blessed face to face! Oh, surpassing bliss, to see Him as he is. Then shall also be like Him, and our joy shall be forever full.

SERMON DCVI.

BY REV. WM. M. BIRCHARD,

HEBRON, CONN.

HONORING THE LORD WITH OUR SUBSTANCE.

or the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine in-
rease ; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall
urst out with new wine."—Prov. iii. 9, 10.

der the old dispensation the divine directions respecting religious vances, and the use of property, were more precise and definite they are under the new. To the Jews, their mode of worship, festivals, their tithes, their ordinary and extraordinary sacrifices fferings were all prescribed; and from the appointed course no de- re was tolerated. Two lambs were required daily for a burnt of- ; on the Sabbath, four ; at the beginning of every month, two bul- , one ram, seven lambs, and a kid ; and in addition to these, animals offered at the passover, on the day of pentecost, upon the new year, n the great day of atonement. These, with the oblation of bread rine which accompanied them, were for the temple service. Besides offerings, the first fruits, both of animals and vegetables, were con- ted to the Lord ; and, moreover, a tenth port of his income must be by the Israelite, for religious purposes. With him it was in no optional whether or not he should contribute to the maintenance ligion, nor whether he should contribute little or much. The amount h God required of him was clearly defined, and payment was en- d, if necessary, by the magistrate.

t under the Christian dispensation, this class of duties is less ac- tely defined. We are not expressly commanded to devote such a on of our substance to religious purposes, and threatened with oral pains and penalties if we refuse compliance. Christ, we think, ned that his kingdom should be established and perpetuated with- he aid of the civil power. His religion, we rejoice to believe, he t should be sustained and diffused on the voluntary principle. And ave great reason for gratitude to God that here in our own land principle is fully recognized, and that the Church is entirely discon- d from the State.

t the fact of our religious duties being unenforced by the civil as doubtless the effect to destroy, or greatly weaken, in many , the sense of obligation to perform them at all. There are persons in every community who either refuse to contribute anything for religious or charitable purposes, or who will bestow a mere pittance upon such objects; and that rather to escape importunity than because they recognize God's claims, and admit that his injunctions respecting the use of what he has entrusted to their keeping, have any binding force, so far as they are concerned. Such persons, practically at least, if not theoretically, regard human law as the source, rule, and measure of obligation. They regard no higher law than that of man's enacting. But this surely is a gross perversion and abuse of the voluntary principle. God's requirements of us are altogether independent of human enactments. He has power to enforce his own laws, and vindicate his authority, without any aid from his creatures; and he will do it in his own time and way.

We greatly err if we imagine that we are under less obligation to serve God with our property than were his ancient covenant people. And I know not where we should find authority for affirming that he requires a less portion of our substance than he did of theirs. The New Testament lays down general principles for our guidance, rather than specific rules. It impresses upon our minds the truth that all we have in our possession is God's—that we are merely his stewards—and that we must at last render up, at his tribunal, an account of our stewardship. It directs us to possess the spirit and imitate the example of Him "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." And it sets before us that exemplification of the gospel given in the lives of the primitive believers, "none of whom said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." Surely these teachings reveal to us the will of God as clearly, and enforce obligation as strongly, as could any specific rules, or definite commands.

But when duties are enjoined, whether in the Old or New Testament, we are incited to their performance by the promise of some reward, spiritual or temporal, near or remote. Of this, our text is an example. It contains a precept and a promise—an injunction and a motive for complying with it. The precept is, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase;" and the promise is, "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." We will consider,

I. The duty here enjoined.

II. The encouragement presented for its performance.

1. What is it to honor the Lord with our substance? It is so to hold and use it as to manifest our supreme regard for his authority and will. It is to devote it to such purposes as he has prescribed in his word. It is to employ it as to secure the greatest amount of human happiness. It

is to make such a disposition of it as to promote the highest welfare of ourselves, our families, and the world at large.

We honor the Lord with our substance when we sincerely dedicate it with ourselves to his service, at the time ot our conversion. We honor him with it, when we use it with a grateful and obedient spirit, to supply our physical wants, or to cultivate our minds, and enrich them with useful knowledge. We honor h.m with it; when, with disinterested motives, we devote it to some purpose whereby the public inlerest or convenience will be promoted. We may even honor him with it when we lay up in store a reasonable supply for the necessities of old age, or for the future subsistence of those who are dependent upon us.

But we do not honor the Lord with it when we use it for purposes of display, or of mere self gratification,—when we employ it to pamper pride, vanity, ambition. or any of those lusts which war against the soul, nor when we use it for our maintenauce while spending our months and years in idleness, nor when we hoard it up in needless profusion, either for ourselves or our children.

But the text has especial reference to that honoring of the Lord with our substance which results from devoting it to religious and charitable purposes. God is honored by us—

1. When we relieve the physical wants of our fellow creatures. In his providence he makes great inequalities to exist in the condition of men. Some he subjects to pinching penury, and upon others he bestows a profusion of the good things of this life. The one class he tries with poverty and the other he tries with wealth. The former is called upon to honor him, more especially, with a patient, submissive, contented mind; and the latter with a beneficent and liberal distribution of his superfluous possessions. To those that have, God has made it the duty to impart to those that have not. Opportunities for the display of beneficence are never wanting, for the poor we have always with us, and whensoever we will, we may do them good. No plea will excuse us from obligation to minister to the necessities of the suffering poor, if a kind Providence have furnished us with the means of doing it. We may indeed, and should be, discriminating in our charities. Some are more worthy of relief than others in the same circumstances. The virtuous poor have stronger claims upon us than the vicious. And some, it may be, by their incurable vices, and perversions of all gifts, may forfeit all claim to our beneficence. Still we must remember that we are more likely to err by withholding than by imparting too freely; and may, perhaps, with little danger, act upon the principle which Richard Baxter laid down for his guidance, who tells us shat "in giving, he did not inquire whether the recipients were good or bad, if they asked relief; for the bad had souls and bodies which needed charity most." It is, indeed, a truth worthy to be borne in mind, that the vicious poor have, in one view, special claim upon our commiseration,

because they have no portion either in this world or in that which is to come. The duty of relieving the needy is one much insisted on in the Scriptures. "To do good, and to communicate," (writes an Apostle,) "forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." And the same Apostle directs Timothy to "charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that the be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

2. Another mode of honoring the Lord with our substance is by devoting it to the maintenance of gospel institutions in our own community. It needs no argumont to prove that God is honored where his Sabbaths are sanctified, his worship is celebrated, and his word is dispensed; and that he is dishonored where the Sabbath is profaned, his worship is neglected, and his word and ordinances are unheeded. Everybody knows that without the gospel a people will inevitably sink into infidelity, immorality and profligacy. Everybody knows that where no sanctuary is, there vice in all its forms abounds, and God is insulted by every kind of wickedness. Every considerate person realizes that he is deeply indebted to the gospel for his security, comfort, and temporal prosperity,—that it has to him a value which he cannot estimate in money. And such being the case, every man is under a moral obligation to contribnte to its support. And no one who possesses common honestv will refuse to do it. No one will refuse who has an enlightened regard for his own worldly interests. And especially will no one refuse who has any regard for God's honor, or any concern for the spiritual and eternal welfare of himself and those around him. But granting that the gospel must be sustained, and that every man ought to aid cheerfully in its maintenance,—what kind of a support should a people accord to him who ministers to them in holy things? This question is now asked by many with unwonted interest. And doubtless it is time it should be; for an ill-judged parsimony on the part of many of our churches is producing its legitimate fruits, in the diminished number of those who devote themselves to the sacred office. The unanswered call for pastors which is now heard from many of the feebler parishes in all parts of our land, conveys a reproof to the Christian public for not having made suitable provision for their spiritual teachers. The answer to the question how much the minister of the gospel should receive, must of course depend upon circumstances. But it is certain that a people disposed to honor the Lord with their substance, will afford him, if able, something more than a scanty subsistence. They will grant him such a support as will enable him to devote himself to his appropriate work without distraction, or solicitude about his pecuniary concerns. They will not compel him to study economy so much as to be obliged to neglect his professional studies. They will so provide for him as to secure his highest efficiency and usefulness. Nor do I

and carefully than he. A multitude of witnesses might be cited to prove that it is profitable to honor the Lord with our substance. Mr. Baxter, whose name I have already mentioned, gives us, in these words, the result of his experience: "This truth I will speak for the encouragement of the charitable, that what little money I have now by me, I got it almost all, I scarcely know how, at that time when I gave most; and since I have had less opportunity of giving, I have had less increase. If we look about us we shall find both on a large and small scale, abundant exemplifications of the truth, that giving to the Lord does not impoverish. When has the American Church enjoyed so much of prosperity, temporal as well as spiritual, as since she entered upon the work of sending Missionaries, Bibles and tracts into all lands? And why is God now pouring into her coffers the gold of California, except to enable and encourage her to abound more and more in this work? Does any Christian man, any man who has faith in God, and really believes his word—imagine that the Church in this land is not the richer for what she has done for the heathen world? She has, indeed, expended millions in her benevolent efforts, but has she not now more millions at her disposal—millions which she can easily spare—than she ever had before? As with the Church at large, so with particular churches. Show me one that is intent upon honoring God with his substance, and I will show you one that he is prospering. And the same is true of indiviuals. God honors those who honor him. The liberal soul he makes fat. He fufils the promise. "Give and it shall be given unto you,—good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." There are doubtless exceptions, real or apparent, but such is the general fact. It is a mistake to suppose that beneficence tends to impoverish us. And a still grosser mistake is it to imagine that a community is any the poorer for sustaining gospel institutions among themselves. The gospel, even in a pecuniary point of view, is worth all that it costs. God never designed that it should be, in any sense, a debtor to those that sustain it. And so well is this understood by worldly men, that it is not uncommon for them to build churches and sustain the ministry in places where they own large property, merely because they find their advantage in so doing. Should this place, or, indeed, any other place around us, be deprived of the gospel, it admits of little question that, in a few years, more would be annually expended in vicious indulgences, and in punishing crime, than is now paid for all relligious purposes whatever. God so administers the affairs of this world, that our duty and our interest always coincide with each other. There is, indeed, a limit beyond which we are not required to pass, in our contributions to religious and charitable ob-

or to escape importunity, or merely because he approves of the object, without any recognition of God's claim, or any feeling of obligation, does not honor the Lord. He may perform an act highly useful in its results, and one which brings honor to himself; but it will not be such an one as God has enjoined, and will not secure the honor that comes from him.

And, moreover, if we would honor the Lord with the property which he has entrusted to our stewardship, the offerings we make to him must bear a reasonable proportion to the amount of our possessions. We may *insult* as well as *honor* him with our gifts. The significance and acceptableness of a religious offering does not depend altogether upon its intrinsic value, but also upon the ability of the offerar, and the spirit with which he makes it. The poor widow was highly commended by our Lord for casting two mites into his treasury; but it was because, in the true spirit of self-denial, "she cast in all that she had, even all her living." Had she been anything but a poor widow, she would have received something very different from a commendation from the Saviour. A poor man may honor the Lord by the contribution of a shilling, while a rich one would insult him with the same sum.

II. Let us now consider the *promise* whereby we are encouraged to perform the duty enjoined in the text: "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." We are here taught that God will repay us for our beneficence with temporal prosperity—that he will reward us with increased substance for the substance with which we honor him. We are told that Christian liberality is the true road to worldly prosperity, to say nothing of the spiritual good resulting from it. Do we believe this doctrine, my hearers? Have we a practical faith in this portion of God's word? For my own part, I see not why it is not as well worthy of credence as the rest of the Bible. I know not why me may not rely upon it as safely as upon any other of the Divine promises. And yet it is but too evident that many, even among the Lord's professed people, have little or no confidence in this particular assurance of his—not even enough to induce them to verify its truth by experiment. Were there but a practical belief of this promise throughout the Church, the Lord's treasury would never be found empty, and the means would never be wanting for carrying forward any truly benevolent and important enterprise. If we need any confirmation of God's word, we may find it by observing the course of his Providence; for his word and Providence always speak the same language. Solomon gives us in the text the result of his observation; and probably no man ever observed more closely and carefully than he. A multitude of witnesses might be cited to prove that it is profitable to honor the Lord with our substance. Mr. Baxter, whose name I have already mentioned, gives us, in these words, the result of his experience : " This truth I will speak for the encouragement of the charitable, that what little money I have now by me, I got it almost all, I scarcely know how, at that time when I gave most ; and since I have had less opportunity of giving, I have had less increase. If we look about us we shall find both on a large and small scale, abundant exemplifications of the truth, that giving to the Lord does not impoverish. When has the American Church enjoyed so much of prosperity, temporal as well as spiritual, as since she entered upon the work of sending Missionaries, Bibles and tracts into all lands? And why is God now pouring into her coffers the gold of California, except to enable and encourage her to abound more and more in this work? Does any Christian man, any man who has faith in God, and really believes his word—imagine that the Church in this land is not the richer for what she has done for the heathen world? She has, indeed, expended millions in her benevolent efforts, but has she not now more millions at her disposal—millions which she can easily spare—than she ever had before? As with the Church at large, so with particular churches. Show me one that is intent upon honoring God with his substance, and I will show you one that he is prospering. And the same is true of indiviuals. God honors those who honor him. The liberal soul he makes fat. He fufils the promise. " Give and it shall be given unto you,—good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." There are doubtless exceptions, real or apparent, but such is the general fact. It is a mistake to suppose that beneficence tends to impoverish us. And a still grosser mistake is it to imagine that a community is any the poorer for sustaining gospel institutions among themselves. The gospel, even in a pecuniary point of view, is worth all that it costs. God never designed that it should be, in any sense, a debtor to those that sustain it. And so well is this understood by worldly men, that it is not uncommon for them to build churches and sustain the ministry in places where they own large property, merely because they find their advantage in so doing. Should this place, or, indeed, any other place around us, be deprived of the gospel, it admits of little question that, in a few years, more would be annually expended in vicious indulgences, and in punishing crime, than is now paid for all relligious purposes whatever. God so administers the affairs of this world, that our duty and our interest always coincide with each other. There is, indeed, a limit beyond which we are not required to pass, in our contributions to religious and charitable ob-

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Christian biography is rich in examples of such rapturous and peaceful foretastes as often characterize the closing scenes of the eminently pious. Of these, perhape, the most remarkable is that of the deeply pious and devoted John Janeway. "I am, through mercy, quite above the fears of death, and am going unto him whom I love above life. O, that I could let you know what I now feel. O, that I could show you what I now see! O, the glory! the unspeakable glory that I behold! My heart is full; my heart is full; Christ smiles, and I cannot choose but smile. Can you find it in your heart to stop me, who am now going to the complete and eternal enjoyment of Christ? Would you keep me from my crown? The arms of my blessed Saviour are open to embrace me; the angels stand ready to carry my soul into his bosom. O, did you but see what I see, you would all cry out with me, "How long, dear Lord? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

Dr. Doddridge, when near his end, said: "Such delightful and transporting views of the heavenly world as my Father is now indulging me with, no words can express."—"Light breaks in! Light breaks in! Hallelujah!" were among the dying words of the pious Blumhart of Basle. Dr. Bateman, a Christian physician, said, a little before he died: "I can hardly distinguish whether this is languor or drowsiness which has come over me; but it is a very agreeable feeling;" and, dying! he exclaimed, "What glory! the angels are waiting for me! Lord Jesus receive my soul! Farewell!" Addison, the English poet, when near death, called a young man, who was rather indifferent to religion, to his bedside, and while he pressed his hand with tender affection, said to him: "Behold with what peace a Christian can die!"

Such language reminds one of the swan-song, which is sweetest when dying. It is like some of that language of rapture which we find in the Scriptures that trembled, like a thrill of heavenly joy, upon the tongues of saints ready to depart. Like Jacob: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Like that of Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Like that of Paul: "I am now ready to be offered; hence forth therefore there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!"

* * * * * * *

ing dust, and on the heavens over you, and on the throne of the living God, and on the bar of judgment, "no hope"—"no hope."

2. *The text gives us a vivid conception of the misery and torment of hell.* From that world, *Hope* is entirely and forever shut out. Her sweet voice, her reviving influence, her blessed companionship, are never seen or felt there. There is an utter extinguishment of this mighty passion in every breast. The future gives no promise of relief or good. Forth from its infinite depths there comes no voice of consolation or gladness, no ray of peace or beam of light. Darkness, and only darkness forever and ever! Misery and only misery forever and ever! Suffering, remorse, abandonment of God, exclusion from heaven, the horrid companionship of hell forever and ever! Without change—without mitigation—without relief! Dreariness, sadness, "weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth," blasphemies, the raging of passion, the reign of despair unchecked, unchangeably, eternally! *Forever, forever!* O, that is the sum of final misery. "No hope" from out the Future. Pain, remorse, separation, darkness, dying, *eternal, eternal.* O, the inconceivable horrors of such a state, such a world! O, on the despairing countenance of that lost spirit I see gleaming in lurid light the fearful words of "no hope." On the walls of his eternal prison where he is doomed to drag out his long and weary existence, I read again "*no hope.*" On the massive chains which fetter his agonized body and raving spirit "no hope" is seen in glaring brightness. On "the smoke of their torment which ascendeth up before God forever and ever" the inscription once more appears "no hope." And on the battlements of heaven, and on the rainbow which is round about the Throne, these fearful words again gleam forth. And now a voice breaks on my ear—ten thousand times ten thousand tongues catch up the cry and repeat it—it rolls through the caverns of that despairing world, and breaks in thunder on the ear of Heaven; and O, it is the same sentence which I have repeated to you so often, but now burdened with the sighs of a lost and despairing world—"no hope—no hope—no hope!"—*Rev. J. M. Sherwood.*

FORETASTES OF HEAVEN AT THE CLOSE OF LIFE.

O, the aged, venerable saint, upon whose mild countenance is reflected the soft, holy dawn of Heaven! We more than love, we reverence him. His very deadness to all the affinities of earth, makes us feel that he already belongs to a higher sphere! We linger around his arm-chair as around an oracle, and our spirits bow and worship in the sacred element

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SERMON DCVII.

BY REV. R. DAVIDSON, D.D.,

NEW-BRUNSWICK, N. J.

THE JOY OF SALVATION.

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."—Psalms li. 10—13.

The history of David is very instructive. Great was his sin, and great was his punishment. He was made to suffer in his person and family, as well as in his own soul. His heart was wrung by family feuds and contentions, the consequences of his transgression. His son Ammon atrociously insulted his sister Tamar, and her brother Absalom fearfully avenged the crime: Absalom, in turn, having become a successful rebel, and having expelled his father from the capital, at the instigation of Ahitophel irreparably widened the breach between them by violating the sanctity of the royal harem before the people and before the sun, pitching his tent on the very spot where David had first nursed his unhappy passion.

And if we inquire why David's old and honoured counsellor should be the first to abet the rebellion of the son, we may trace his motives back to the outraged feelings of family pride, Bathsheba was the grand-daughter of Ahitophel

Among the thirty-seven officers of the royal life-guards, we find the name of Eliam, the son of Ahitophel the Gilonite, and beside it, that of Uriah the Hittite, who had for his wife, Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam. No wonder, then, that Absalom knew what he was about, when he sent to Ahitophel to strengthen, by his name and influence, the conspiracy against the wretched king.

While David, on one hand, had alienated the wise old counsellor, on the other he had put himself completely in the power of his general, and was obliged tamely to submit to Joab's arrogance, as well as his direct disobedience in not sparing the young man, Absalom. So did not David yield when Joab assassinated Abner. Then he compelled Joab himself to put on sackcloth, and join in the funeral procession after Abner's bier. But now he submits to his servant's insolence, and passively complies with his directions. He had made Joab his confidant and accomplice in the matter of Uriah, and he never was his own man afterwards.

> **" Oh, what a tangled web we weave,**
> **When first we practice to deceive !"**

But if David smarted in his person and his family, he was made to suffer yet more severely in his own soul. Of the bitterness of his remorseful feelings, the fifty-first Psalm is a faithful record What depths of self-abasement, what tender regrets what penitential sorrow it breathes! He represents himself as incessantly haunted by the gaunt spectre of his guilt, without repose, night and day. " My sin is ever before me." Raised above the reach of the law by his regal station, he the more freely bewailed his vileness in the sight of his heavenly Judge. " Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ardently he longs for the purifying hyssop, and envies the whiteness of the snow. Nathan had told him, " by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; and, conscious of the reproach he had brought upon religion, he desires reinstatement in the divine favor, that he may, as far as possible, repair the great wrong he had done, and once more resume those active duties which his torpid conscience had so long intermitted. Therefore he prays, " Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

It is evident that David's chagrin for the shame and scandal his conduct had cast upon religion, was at least as keen as his personal mortification ; and this is still further evinced by his fervent desire, in close of the psalm, that God would do good, in his good pleasure, unto Zion, and build the walls of Jerusalem.

The sentiment to which the psalmist was led to give utterance, is weighty, and deserves to be pondered. It is a truth which the professed people of God, in every age, should seriously lay to heart. *A clean conscience, and a lively enjoyment of religion are necessary to extensive usefulness and influence in the cause of God, and in winning souls to Him.*

This will appear from three reasons, embracing the elements on which a successful result depends—*Experience, Confidence, and Joy.*

I. *Only an experimental acquaintance with religion can qualify any one to speak of it to edification.*

A blind man has been known to lecture on colors; but a blind man could not teach the art of painting. In like manner. Religion is not a mere theory but a practice also. Its vitality and excellence consist in action. It is a life and a power. Hence the apostle speaks of the power of godliness, and distinguishes between the power and the form. Without the former, the latter is but an empty shell. It is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Notions picked up at second-hand must necessarily be crude, superficial, and inadequate. What a man learns by hearsay, he may, parrot-like, prate about, but his conceptions lack clearness and solidity. No description can give the same vivid idea of a thing as an actual acquaintance with it. Describe to any one the flavor of some tropical fruit which he has never seen, or some charming landscape which he has never visited; what distinct impression will be left on his mind? But, on the contrary, let him taste the fruit himself, and he has an accurate idea of its flavor at once. Let him see the landscape with his own eyes, and though he should have but a single glimpse, and his sight should be from that moment irreparably lost, yet that momentary glimpse has sufficed to reveal to him, and to daguerreotype ineffaceably upon his memory, glories and beauties which fancy never could have conjured up. Such is the infinite superiority of knowledge gained by experience over that obtained from the description of others. Doubtless it is in allusion to the clearness and distinctness of an experimental knowledge of religion, that the exhortation is addressed to us by the sacred writers, "O, *taste* and *see* that the Lord is good;" "Come and *see!*" "*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is good."

Acting upon this principle, the apostle Paul charged Timothy, when employed as an evangelist, and ordaining elders in every city, "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." He was persuaded that an experimental knowledge of the trials and supports of the Christian life was necessary to furnish the pastor for his work, and enlarge his usefulness and efficiency among the children of sorrow. How could he who had never mourned enter into the feelings of the mourner, or be qualified to administer either soothing sympathy or scriptural consolation? Therefore he used the language, "who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Luther was of this opinion when he said that there are three things that make a divine—temptation, meditation, and prayer. He believed that none was competent to give saving advice to souls plunged in melancholy, agitated by stormy trials, and abandoned to despair, except one who had gone through deep waters himself, and who was familiar with like tempestuous emotions. Should a person, laboring under great anxiety and distress of mind on account of sin, and ignorant how to be rid of his burden, come to an inexperienced pastor, instead of directing him to the blessed Saviour and his atoning blood, he would very likely (as unhappily has been done) content himself with telling the distressed person to take medicine, or go into cheerful society, and try to get rid of his melancholy, by diverting his mind from serious subjects. Such are the blind leaders of the blind; and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

People have a wonderful instinct and sagacity in determining who is likely to benefit them. As the Babylonians brought their sick to the market-place, and asked such of the passers-by as had had the same disease, to tell the remedy that cured them, so the conscience-stricken will turn away from the learned and profound preacher, who is deficient in a wide experience, to hang with breathless eagerness upon the lips of him who can say, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." Men want those that have suffered and sorrowed like themselves, to show the way of relief for their burdened hearts. Just so in a battle, it is the veteran; in a shipwreck it is the old mariner, to whom all eyes are turned with expectation, because they have been in such scenes before. They have not acquired their knowledge at second hand.

II. This leads us to notice another element of success—*Confidence. Without confidence we cannot undertake to guide others.*

A guide must have the confidence of those who follow him; and, in order to command it, he must have confidence in himself. Hesitation is most undesirable. Time is lost by pausing to study the path, or by retracing one's steps. Guessing and doubt awaken well-founded distrust and alarm. No wonder if men abandon such a guide for their own conjectures. They are at least no worse off.

But how can a man have satisfaction in his own mind, and confidence in his own judgment, when he is disturbed by doubts and fears? Fear is the natural concomitant of a guilty conscience. A conscience ill at ease will transform the bravest into cowards. Why else did Adam and his consort hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Always before had they been glad to observe the tokens of his walking in the garden in the cool of the day, but then they were innocent. Now they skulked like guilty culprits, and sought concealment for their shame. David, after Joab's complicity in that dreadful affair before the walls of Rabbah, cowered before his general, and bore his rebukes without reply; nay, he was completely unmanned, even before that dead dog Shimei, "let him alone, and let him curse," said he, "for the Lord hath bidden him." Would you have another instance? See those two desciples, at early dawn, passing to the sepulchre to ascertain the resurrection of their Master. "So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." When before did Peter suffer John to outrun him? When before did he allow another to be first in any duty? Who would recognize in him the same Peter who was always foremost to speak, foremost to build tabernacles on the Mount, foremost to plunge into the sea, foremost to draw the sword, now lagging behind, his impetuosity checked, his ardor chilled? What a sad change! It is an effort to drag along his weary feet, for guilt, like a weight of lead, clogs them; the remembrance of the oath, and the denial, of the cock-crow, and the look of reproach, retards his steps.

Not otherwise was it with the Israelites at Hormah, and on various occasions before their Syrian enemies. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" How differently they acted when, sustained by a righteous cause, and animated by a good conscience, they discomfited the armies of the aliens, and, under the Maccabees vindicated the independence of their country. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion." They that are conscious of being forsaken of the Lord shall be subject to the most dreadful panics, as was predicted, "Upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth," Lev. xxvi. 36.

It needs not that we look abroad, or summon from the infernal world, the Furies that shall lash the guilty conscience. "Every one that finds me shall slay me," said the first homicide, trembling with undissembled cowardice. "My sin is ever before me," exclaimed David, with sackcloth on his loins. Before Belshazzar understood what the handwriting meant, as soon as he saw the flaming letters on the wall, "his countenance changed, and his knees smote together." Ahab exclaimed in undisguised agitation, when he met Elijah in the way, "hast thou found me, oh, mine enemy?" Who told him that Elijah was in search of him, or that he was his enemy? So also Herod's first thought, when he heard of Christ's miracles, was, that "John the baptist, whom he had beheaded, was risen from the dead." Thus doth every culprit, like Pashur, who insulted the Lord's prophet, become a Magor-missibib, a terror to himself. "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side," Job xviii. 11, 12. "A dreadful sound is in his ears," Job xv. 21. "The first-born of Death shall devour his strength. His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of Terrors. They that come after him shall be astonied at his day; as they that went before were affrighted," Job xviii. 13 14, 20.

"'Tis not the babbling of a busy world,
Where praise and censure are at random hurled,
Which can the meanest of my thoughts control,
Or shake one settled purpose of my soul.
Free and at large might their wild curses roam,
If all, if all, alas! were well at home.
No! 'tis the tale which angry Conscience tells,
When she, with more than tragic horror, swells
Each circumstance of guilt; when stern, but true,
She brings bad actions forth into review,
And like the dread hand-writing on the wall,
Bids late remorse awake at reason's call:
Arm'd at all points, bids scorpion vengeance pass,
And to the mind holds up reflection's glass;
The mind which, starting, heaves the heartfelt groan,
And hates that form she knows to be her own." *

Wretched, most wretched is the condition of the sinner laboring under poignant convictions. If his guilt has been detected and exposed to the world, the consciousness of that exposure, and the dread of scorn's slow moving finger, weigh him down. And even if he feels secure against detection, he knows that God is privy to it, and has "set all his sins before him, his secret sins in the light of his countenance." How cutting his self-upbraidings! how prompt his remorse! how bitter his loathing of himself! No position seems too humble for him to take, no penance too heavy to undergo. He drowns his pillow in hot tears; he rises at midnight from a sleepless couch, and flings himself upon his knees at his bedside, praying in the anguish of his soul for mercy—that mercy that was extended to the publican—and longing for the peace of God to cool and soothe his distracted bosom. His soul is a desolate waste, whose bleakness no verdure refreshes. His proud heart is nigh to bursting, and a fever parches his veins. And then comes a disconsolate wringing of the hands, and a compressure of the quivering lip,

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* Churchill.

and a shrinking from the pleasant light of day. The CURSE seems to rest upon him. It has an unearthly amplitude. It fills the bounds of space. It is palpable and embodied, as though he could clutch it in his convulsive grasp. It weighs him down, and sits upon him like a mountain of lead. He cries in his agony, "Reprobate that I am! the fire of God's wrath is already enkindled within my bosom. Jesus of Nazareth, torment me not before my time!" Would we could admit this to be nothing but a fancy sketch, a fiction without a counterpart in reality! But it is itself the dread reality, And to such a fearful height does this uneasiness sometimes rise, that the unhappy victim of unappeased remorse is willing to seek relief in the grave, and courts the aid of the tube, the cord, or the wave, in order to terminate his agonizing suspense.

"And know the worst his fears foreshow."

Can such a one, destitute of all satisfaction in his own soul; an utter stranger to the peace of God which passeth understanding: devoid of confidence in God, in himself, in the truth and efficacy of religion; can such a one invite sinners to Zion, or teach transgressors the ways of God; He may be a beacon to warn, but never a clarion to rouse to victory. No! a clean heart and a clear conscience must he have who takes the awful name of God upon his lips, or would act as interpreter and guide to the conscience-stricken and sin-laden. "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?"

III. We are now prepared to advance to a third proposition, as before indicated. In order to win souls to God, *it is desirable that we have a lively enjoyment of religion.*

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit! Then," adds the psalmist, "then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and," through my zeal and fidelity, "sinners shall be converted unto thee." The connection between these two things, the condition and the result, could not be more plainly pointed out.

Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm. All the sympathies of our nature respond in unison with it. The indifferent will not be listened to. He who would make others feel, must feel himself. He who would unlock the fount of tears, must be the first to weep. He that would enkindle and carry away his auditors, must have his own soul on fire. We cannot expect others to be interested where we feel no interest ourselves.

A certain person of influence once procured the pardon of a culprit who lay under sentence of death. As soon as the poor man regained his liberty, he sought out his benefactor, and relieved his full heart of the torrent of his gratitude. "Every drop of my blood," said he, "thanks you; I would follow you on my knees over the world."

Similar should be our feelings towards the Lord Jesus, with this difference, that our feelings should be elicited with still greater warmth, inasmuch as he not merely interceded for our release, but actually laid down his head for our head, his life for our life. He gave up a throne for the cross, a crown of glory for a crown of thorns, the sceptre of empire for a reed of mockery, the robe of judgment for a soldier's rags. He gave his back to the smiters, and withheld not his cheek from being buffeted and spit upon. For our reproaches was he reproached, and for our bondage was he bound.

If Jesus consented to such sacrifices for us, shall we hesitate at any for him? If he thus devoted himself for us without reserve, shall we set cautious bounds to our devotion to him? If he died for us, is it too much to expect that we live unto him?

To appreciate the joy of salvation, we must know what it is to be lost. *To be lost!* What numerous sad images rise up before the mind at that fearful word;—the ship lost at sea;—the traveller lost in a wild land infested by savages;—the wanderer lost among the icy clefts of the Alps;—the military leader knowing that all his fortunes will be lost with a single decisive battle;—the tender mother frantic over the cold remains of a lost darling;—an unfortunate man lost in the vast cataract in spite of every attempt to save him;—all these call up emotions of a pensive character;—but what are all such losses to the loss of the soul! A soul is wrecked amid the tempests of life, and thenceforth drifts a hapless, hopeless wanderer over the dark ocean of eternity, without a star, without a helm, without a haven. A poor lost soul! What volumes of meaning, what unsounded depths of tenderness are there in that word! Go to the hill of Calvary, and count every groan, and every drop of blood that fall from the august sufferer, and from the price paid for the soul's redemption learn the greatness of its loss. Look down into the pit, of hell, and from the shrieks and screams that issue through its grated doors, learn the same vivid lesson. The inmates of that drear abode have new light shed upon the meaning of the word "*Lost!*" On earth they thought they knew it, now they *feel* it! Lost to holiness, lost to happiness, lost to hope, lost to heaven, such is the condition of the children of disobedience. Could you hear one of those miserable souls wailing out the curse of its eternity, the word "lost" would have henceforth a new meaning for you. The sound would haunt you forever. To this loss are we all exposed, this ruin impends over every one of us. Not all feel it. Some laugh at it. They coldly call it enthusiasm. But there are others who have felt the sting of conscience, and moaned over the anticipated curse. Every pang of remorse has seemed like a sparkle from the foam of the lake that burneth, setting their souls on fire. They know what David felt when he said, "the terrors of hell gat hold upon me." "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted."

And they know too what it is to find the burden gone; to be able to lift up their eyes once more to the blue sky, and see there a reconciled Father's smile; to have Christ in them, the hope of glory, to think of death without alarm, and of the judgment-day without trembling. He who led captivity captive, has restored the poor estray, and whispered in the ear hope, sweet as angel music, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The joy of salvation! None know that joy but they who are saved. Those that were on the very verge of perishing, and were snatched from the jaws of death may speak of it. The lost sailor, the lost wayfarer, the lost battle, the lost babe, the lost swimmer; —imagine in each case, a wonderful and happy reverse. What shouts of joy, what songs of praise, what vows of gratitude celebrate their deliverance!

They that have tasted the joy of salvation are privileged to recommend it to others. They know something of its sweetness. They have felt the magic of its power. They are satisfied that it is a blessed reality. They feel that it is no morbid fancy, no idle dream. Full of the glow of enthusiasm, they accost every one they meet, "Come with us, and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

Unless religion be in a lively state in our souls, and we in some degree enjoy its power, we will feel little inducement to recommend it to others. But on the contrary, if we have a lively enjoyment of religion, we will long to make every one a partaker of our joy. The leaven will work. It is not the nature of Christianity to sit still at home, when there is work to be done for God and for souls. Then, when the heart is in a right and happy frame, then will zeal boil, and the tongue grow pliant. Then will they that love the Lord, speak often one to another. They will pray and labor, and teach transgressors their ways, and sinners shall be converted to God.

This subject gives birth to several practical reflections.

1. How desirable and precious the joy of salvation! How enviable, beyond wealth and state, a lively enjoyment of religion in the heart! Thrice happy the soul which holds communion with Jesus, which has the freedom of the city of God, and feeds on the heavenly manna!

2. If we find torpor and inactivity benumbing us in the service of God, it is not difficult to conjecture the cause. "Sin lieth at the door." Want of interest arises from the incrustation of sin; coldness and remissness, and backsliding and love of the world are at the bottom of it all.

3. The way of return is equally obvious. Retrace your steps. Begin at the beginning. Re-lay the foundation. Do your first

works over again. Do not rely on old experience, but replenish the lamp with fresh oil.

4. We may infer that ordinarily a deep experience is necessary to great usefulness. Paul was such an instance. He was arrested in the midst of his persecution and rancor, and "obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." John Newton was another example. Who viler than he? Once engaged in the accursed traffic in slaves on the coast of Africa, himself a slave to every lust. Yet was he brought to repentance, and extensive usefulness. Nowhere do we find more edifying hymns illustrative of Christian experience than his. John Bunyan was another instance of distinguishing grace. The blaspheming, cursing, swearing tinker, to hear whose profanity made the blood of every pious hearer run cold, was brought to see the error of his ways. Sharp and severe were his inward conflicts, but once a pilgrim on the way to Zion, he so well delineated the pilgrim's progress, that the map serves as an itinerary still, and grows in popularity as it grows in age.

5. We see the secret, under God, of revivals of religion. When religion is in a lively state in the heart, it is easy to talk about it. The heart is engaged. The preacher has a limited part to perform. He cannot do everything. The Church has something to do. You should bring your friends, your relatives, your acquaintances, your neighbours, the community, the world itself, in the arms of your faith, and lay them at the feet of Jesus; and ask earnestly for a blessing upon them. Seek to have your own souls engaged, that you may be the readier to do good to others. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!" Such is the combination of agencies in the economy of grace. The Spirit is saying, Come! The Spirit is ready to do his part, but is the Bride doing hers? Is the Church saying, Come? Does he that heareth say, Come? Oh, ye officers of the Church, ye men and women whose names are on the roll as members of the Church, ye that profess to be followers of the Lamb, are you saying, Come? Are you saying to the unconverted, "Come with us, and we will do you good!" Or are you by your example and conduct, saying as plainly as if it were expressed in words, "Do not come; you will get no good; you will be as well off where you are?" Dreadful is the guilt of those who come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Beware how you incur the curse of Meroz.

6. We are taught by our text to invoke the aid of the blessed Spirit. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me! Uphold me with thy free Spirit!" Mindful of our dependence on divine aid, seek it continually. Dread going in your own strength. Lean on the arm of the Lord. The Spirit is a spirit of purity, of holiness, of peace, of love. The heavenly dove is easily grieved by the indulgence of sentiments and inclinations contrary to his nature, such as sensuality, worldliness, selfishness or anger. But he i

ever ready to dwell in the heart that welcomes him, and cherishes his influences. Pray then for his renewing, revivifying, enlightening purifying and hallowing presence. Banish every idol from your heart, and devoutly consecrate yourself as a living temple unto the Lord, into which nothing unclean or profane shall be admitted. So shall the great objects of the Christian life be attained, so will your peace flow like a river—so will you lead on earth the life of angels—so will you be honoured in turning many to righteousness, and when life's last duties shall be over, sweetly will the benediction of God and the welcome of the glorified sound in your ears.

SERMON DCVIII.

BY REV. EDWARD STRONG.

NEW HAVEN, CT.

RELIGIOUS DECLENSION.

"My people are bent to backsliding from me."—HOSEA xi. 7.

How often, in the Scriptures, is this allegation brought against the people of God! In how varied forms, and under how varied imagery! Surely, we exclaim, the standard of Christian duty is elevated, indeed; and its divine author, of purer eyes, than to behold iniquity or look upon sin but with abhorrence. And so it is. The standard of Christian duty is not what many suppose. Nor is God what many suppose. He is not so indifferent to the maintenance of his law; not so indifferent to seemingly trivial departures from it; not so content to overlook backsliding.

There is always, in these allegations, an indication of deep emotion. It is apparent that the infinite heart of God is wounded by the serpent-tooth of his children's ingratitude—is offended by their fickleness and treachery, and is altogether in earnest when charging their guilt upon them. This is enough to impart a solemn interest to our meditation upon the charge contained in the text.

How singular the moral condition of a believer bent on backsliding. It is not a mere vacillation between God and mammon, holiness and sin, but a steady leaning, an earnest leaning toward the latter. It is the very disposition with which Israel, in the transit from Egypt to Canaan, turned back, in their hearts, to the land of their bondage. It is the disposition with which they preferred the leeks and onions of slavery, to the self-denials that were necessary in crossing the wilderness to the promised land—with which they made their molten calf, went after Baal, sacrificed to Moloch, and variously forsook God their Saviour. Its perverseness is but too apparent.

I. We will inquire who among us must plead guilty to the charge *that they are bent on backsliding!*

II. *Contemplate their guilt.*

III. *Survey the consequences* which timely repentance can alone avert.

I. In the first place, by what marks may we identify those among us who may justly be considered as *bent on backsliding*?

1. The first mark is a *neglect of secret and family prayer.* I place these kinds of prayers together, because the neglect of one ordinarily follows neglect of the other. So fidelity in the one will ordinarily follow fidelity in the other. Neglect of prayer is, for the most part, at the beginning, middle, and end of backsliding. It pervades the whole career of departure from God. The Christian never returns to God, nor God to him, till this neglect ceases. Ordinarily the closet is the first meeting place of the estranged parties. Visits of love and mercy, indwellings of the Holy Spirit are only vouchsafed to those whose earnest petitions indicate their appreciation of the value of these gifts.

Wherever, in the Church, you find an individual regarding his closet with disrelish, restraining prayer, often omitting it altogether at other times content with a mere hurried performance of the externals of devotion, finding his thoughts even in the sacred place where "none but God is near," roving off to his employment—accustomed to resort thither, not from inward longing for communion with God, not from a conviction of moral weakness, and need of grace, but only to silence the demands of duty—happier to come forth than to enter there; happier not because of an approving conscience and smiling Saviour, but because a task is over, and he may plunge again untrammeled into his wonted worldliness. Wherever you find an individual like this, you find one *bent on backsliding*; I might add, *one* who has already glided away to no inconsiderable distance from God. The eye of the Saviour looks deeper than our own, and that eye beholds the earnest bent of his mind. It sees his grovelling disposition, his prayer-neglecting habit, and thus discerns *one* mark, and that a deep one, of his apostacy.

2. Another mark is *habitual neglect of the Bible.* Whoever walks closely with God takes delight in his word. He reads it often. He meditates upon it.. He can say with the Psalmist, from his own blessed *experience*, "thy word is sweet to my taste." He is attracted to it as a medium of communion with God. He loves it because it contains those precious promises which are like rivers of consolation and hope. He loves it for its purity. He loves it for those precepts, in obedience to which he finds a rich reward. Not so he who is bent on backsliding He delights not in the Scriptures. He reads them accordingly, if at all, rather from a *conviction of duty*, than a felt satisfaction in thus communing with God. His soul is never bathed in them as in a pure fountain. He never fairly imbibes their celestial spirit, and so never derives from them a quickening power.

Fellow Christian! Is it so with you? Are you neglectful not only of private and domestic prayer, but also of the sacred word? Is it but seldom that you commune with its pages? Then we may bring our appeal to your own consciousness. You can but confess that your affections do not centre as they should upon God. They are not identified as they should be with the Saviour's cause.

3. *Backwardness or reluctance in efforts to do good*, is another indication that a professing Christian is bent on backsliding. Have you then no deep impulse within, urging you to a degree of activity in religion, corresponding to what you exhibit in matters of worldly concern? Does a civil, political, or pecuniary enterprise, awaken an energy and zeal which you never evince for the Saviour's cause? If so, what does it indicate? If you are found rolling onward these enterprises, sympathising, speaking acting, making your influence tell variously in their promotion, and yet when religion is the theme, and the Redeemer's glory the motive, you are mute, inactive, indifferent, what can be the only rational inference? I speak of any enterprise in which you feel a deep interest, one on which your heart is fixed, and I say that just as a reluctance to promote *that* enterprise, would argue little interest in it; so reluctance to promote religion by doing good, argues that you feel little interest in religion. If you never attempt to exert a positive influence for the Saviour, urging fellow Christians forward in duty, yourself leading the way, and inviting sinners to the place of worship, and to the Cross; if you do not *this*, even with the members of your own domestic circle, certainly you give evidence, both to God and man either that you are not a Christian, or else are bent on backsliding.

4· Another mark by which to identify the class in question, is *the undervaluing of religious ordinances*. Lightly to esteem the house of God, its praises prayers, instructions, hallowed associations, indicates a backsliding heart. If, for example, you lightly esteem the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, deferring long the dedication of your children to God, approaching but seldom, or heartlessly, to take the sacred symbols of a crucified Saviour—if you enter the house of God, taking your place among his worshippers, you scarcely know why, unless it be from the influence of education, habit, and desire for the respect of Christian people. If you regard more forms and ceremonies, the pomp and parade of religion than its power—the shadow more than the substance—what inference can be drawn from this, except that either you are not a Christian or have become a backslider?

One who hungers and thirsts after righteousness cannot do thus—cannot *feel* thus. The hungry will not regard the shadow of food. They want the substance. The thirsty will not regard the bubbling of the stream. They must have the water. So will not a Christian, whose heart is true to the Saviour, fixed upon him, be content with the *forms* of religion. He must feel its power. He *must* actually taste its sweetness.

Other marks of a backsliding believer there are. But we can only name them. They are, however, not unworthy of your serious regard. *Censoriousness* is one. It grows out of a want of Christian charity, and a felt personal imperfection. High regard for *gaiety* and *fashion* is another. Preference of vain amusements to those whose entire innocence no one will question, and of *frivolous* company to the society of the spiritually-minded, indicates also, in a Christian professor, a *heart bent* to backsliding from God.

II. *Secondly*, we are to consider *the guilt which this moral condition involves.* If the marks already adverted to, belong to any in this assembly, I beg them seriously to ponder what remains to be said; especially now the ever accumulating guilt of occupying so strange a position relative to God and religion.

1. Consider, in the first place, that every such professor *is acting the part of a hypocrite.* We do not charge him with the guilt of *wilful* hypocrisy, but with that of *practical* hypocrisy. It is a charge, Christian brethren, which I grieve to make. This, however, is of less consequence than the question against *whom among us* it may fairly lie. Against whom do God and an accusing conscience bear witness? It is *I myself?* God forbid that I should wholly acquit myself while criminating—if so it prove—any of you.

Yet in all plainness, I must insist, that they who recognize in themselves the foregoing marks of backsliding, are acting a part of the hypocrite. What are those high professions made, hearer, before angels and men? If your life accord not with them,—if you endeavor not earnestly and always *to be* what you profess to be, and *to do* what you profess to do, the charge of hypocrisy must lie against you; the guilt of hypocrisy is at your door, nay, is actually upon your soul. So long as your disposition and manner of life are irreconcilable with the tenor of your religious vows, you are not what you profess; you are not what you would have others consider you; you have one kind of religion on your lips, and another in your *heart.* There are indeed vows of allegiance to God—protestations of friendship and discipleship to Christ, but nothing correspondent to these vows and protestations appears in your life. That life retracts them. It is eloquent of loyalty and love, not to the Saviour, but to the world. What shall this be termed if not *hypocrisy?* And if it *be* hypocrisy its guilt is enough apparent.

2. Again, the guilt of those who are obnoxious to the allegation of the text appears in this, that their influence goes *to depress the standard of piety* which the Saviour has fixed, to adulterate that system of truth and duty which he has given as the hope of the world. Christianity is a holy religion. Its aim is to bind the heart of man, by the magnetic energy of love, to Heaven. Its aim is to elevate thither all his aspirations. Its standard of duty

is high and sacred. Nor does it challenge the heart alone. For it aims to harmonize the external and the internal in man—to exhibit, both to celestial beings and to the world, the attractive beauty of a holy heart and a holy life ; in other words, of renewed affections carried out in the Christian's life.

Now what we charge upon every Christian professor whose heart is bent to backsliding, is the guilt of adulterating this holy religion, and depressing, so far as his influence goes, its divine standard of duty. Born of heaven, Christianity comes to earth with heaven's own purity. It comes freighted with heaven's own fruition. What is it then we are doing when we put a base alloy into the gold of heaven ? Intermingling principles of selfishness with those of a heaven born beneficence? Better, far better, reject Christianity ; better refuse its grace, than having embraced, to depress its standard of holiness. In the former case the rejector alone will perish ; in the latter he may occasion the perdition of many.

The Creator loves indeed each individual soul, but he loves Christianity *better*, because it is a glorious scheme of salvation for *myriads*. What sentiments then must He cherish toward those who thus corrupt this fountain of health and life, destroying its beauty, and its adaptation to save?

Of course, no Christian could *intend* to perpetrate so audacious a crime. The intention to work such mischief is not charged upon any one. But yet all this mischief is involved in the course pursued by every backslider. The life of a Christian *must* and *will* be taken as an exponent of what Christianity is—an interpreter of its divine principles and precepts. Often indeed do they prove false expounders of their boasted religion ; but this will not prevent their expositions from being received. It will not prevent men of the world from imbibing thence their impressions of Christianity. Not at all. They may even know that these lives are little better than a libel on our holy religion, they will yet reason that if in outward deportment they fall not below the example of Christians, neither will they in respect to their destiny in the future life.

Yes, the backsliding Christian is an adulterator of Christianity. He does not give it to others, as the Bible does to *him*. He dishonours it. He brings it into disrepute. As far as his influence extends, at least for the time of his guilty wandering, he depresses it to the level of other systems of religion, tarnishing the glory of the Saviour by putting him into a catalogue of impostors. He adulterates the life-giving stream of mercy. Receiving it from God in its purity, and professing to exhibit to the world what it is, by his manner of life, he creates habitually a false impression. As he received Christ Jesus he does not walk in him. On the contrary, he begins soon to tamper with that which is forbidden, earnestly endeavoring to secure the coalesscence in a monstrous union of Christianity and earthliness. Such is the practical bearing of the backslider's daily life,—a bearing and a result which render his *guilt* but too apparent.

3. Another particular will shed additional light upon the point before us. The backslider, or what is practically the same thing, he who is *bent* to backsliding, *retards the progress of Christianity in the world.* He cuts the senews of its strength. He takes off its chariot wheels. He encumbers it with enormous burdens, piling upon it mountains, while at the same time slipping the belt that connects it with omnipotent power. *Hear me,* backsliding Christian, for I fancy you know not what you do, while bent on such a course. You treat Christianity as Samson was treated by the perfidious Delilah. By you it is shorn of its strength, divested of its properties as a *divine* religion, and then divested of much of the energy it might, under other conditions, exert as a *human* system. In proportion as you give by your daily example a false impression of what true piety is, you veil the essential glory of Christianity. The Saviour intended that the beauty of godliness should appear in your lives. This he expressly enjoined. Clearly then, if you veil this beauty, you are guilty in no ordinary degree—guilty of downright disobedience, and of the essential and felt obligation to exhibit to others the attractiveness of the gospel. Thus you hinder it. Its blessings will come to fewer households; will gladden fewer hearts, and gladden immeasurably less even those who embrace it, because through your example they will ordinarily follow Christ *afar off.*

I am speaking, be it remembered not of *all* Christians, but only of those whose hearts are but *half* for God. Every Christian professor whose conscience assures him that he belongs to this number, I address with affectionate but earnest remonstrance. Oh, my brethren, why is this? Why consent to hinder the gospel of Christ? Why contract the guilt which this must of course involve? Why not rather cherish for the Saviour's cause, a love so intense that it shall ever be controlling motive, leading you to maintain a close fellowship with him?

4. Consider again as an index of your guilt, that while bent to backsliding, you cannot be depended on in religion. You are not reliable persons. Christ cannot rely upon you. The Church cannot. Bound to the Saviour by an everlasting indenture, by a covenant which has received your own voluntary assent, it is yet impossible for him to depend upon you. You prove recreant to duty. He bids you go work in his vineyard. The reply is "I go sir," but you go not, certainly not according to the spirit and extent of his command.

He bids you deny *all* ungodliness, be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; he bids you while not slothful in business to be fervent in spirit, to pray without ceasing—have your conversation in heaven—die unto sin daily—take up your cross and bear it after him—in a word, to be like strangers and pilgrims here, seeking another and a *better* country, even a heavenly.

So far as the terms of profession go, you meet his demands. You covenant to do all these things, adorning the gospel rather than hindering it—doing good as you have opportunity, rather than by your example doing evil. In this course you covenant to persevere to the end. On the strength of these vows—If I may so say—the Saviour entrusts in your hands the prospects and interests of his kingdom. He seems to retire personally to the throne of heaven as though he might safely commit these interests, however vast, to such fair-promising disciples.

But alas, when at the sixth or ninth hour he returns, what is the condition of that sacred cause? Where the sacred name, and honor, and interests of Christ? Down-trodden, neglected the taunt of the scorner, clothed in sackcloth and desolate. And where are those its trustees, defenders, champions, boasted friends? Many are gone off to the world as a better portion, so mingled with the multitude in the scramble of life that we can no longer identify them, only that long time ago they susbcribed their names to the Lord. And where are the dying sinners for whom on the cross mercy was provided, and whom the Redeemer would fain that Christians should have led to him for salvation. Where are they? Some have gone to the grave. Others are now ready to perish in their sins. All are unconcerned because they see Christians unconcerned. Yet they are on their way to the bar of God, speeding with rapid flight to their eternal doom. Some, Christian brethren, are already beyond your influence; others will be soon. Such is the condition in which the Master, on returning, finds his neglected cause.

What dependence is to be placed on servants like these? And what must be the guilt of perfidy in circumstances like these?

Verily, Christianity may exclaim in reference to many of its professed votaries, "*deliver me from my friends.*"

It cannot be that any true Christian seriously considers what he is doing when a backslider. I cannot therefore suppose that this flagrant sin is *wilfully* committed. Were it so, farewell their prospect of heaven. They would merit and receive the deepest place in hell. Yet a heart bent to backsliding is altogether false to Christ, unreliable, and guilty to the extent I have described. Would to God, my brethren and friends, that the Holy Spirit might set our sins in order before our minds, and that a conviction of personal guilt might lead us to repent and do our first works!

III. It remains for me to speak of the *consequences of continuing in this guilty course.* There are two rods in the hand of God for offenders, the rod of *discipline*, and the rod of *retribution.* The former is to correct, with a view to reclaim the offender. The latter is to punish the incorrigible, with a view to vindicate and maintain his outraged authority. With the rod of discipline, comes oftentimes desolation, rebuke, discomfort, darkness and barrenness, in spiritual experience. Should these various bitter experiences, sent to the soul, or the Church, by way of fatherly discipline, fail of recalling the backsliders—should they yet pursue the world, deaf to the voice of love, alluring them back to God—deaf also to the voice of his authority, and to that of his providence, loudly rebuking their perfidy, I can see but one alternative. According to the principles of the Bible they must perish as *incorrigible*, just as if they had never professed religion. To bear the name of a Christian, cannot carry with it the virtue to save a soul. Not the *name* but the *thing*, the vitality, the real essence is essential. Accordingly, I see not why, if admonition, promise, threatening, and all disciplinary influences which the Saviour may employ, fail to recover those who are *bent to backsliding*, they must not suffer the full penalty of unrepented, unpardoned sin.

1. The first appliances, however, which God will use are disciplinary. And the first consequence to be apprehended by a backslider, whether an individual or a Church, is *outward rebuke*. How often has God crossed the path of a Christian's worldliness, or of a Church in its declension! What signal rebuke he has administered! With the individual how many times has he dried up the streams of idolized accumulation!—permitted his store, his workship, his dwelling to be consumed with flames, his ships to be engulphed in the waves, his harvest fields to be blighted. How may times has affliction uttered God's rebuke! Sickness, prolonged, it may be, and painful, in his person or family, has admonished him. And how many times has it proved that nothing would avail till death took the first-born, and it was over the narrow grave of a loved one that the first tears of repentance fell, the first resolution to be entirely devoted to the Savoiur was formed, and the first steps of the backslider's return taken.

In like manner has it been with 'churches in their general declension. Their candlestick has been removed out of its place. The fire of devotion has gone out on their altars. Israel of old illustrates this. The Seven Churches of Asia are seven illustrations, and so too many churches at the present day, which have a name to live, but are dead.

2. Another consequence is the *discomfort of the forsaken soul;* its restless condition, the possibly deep gloom which may settle down like night upon it. It must be unhappy when are withdrawn, with a grieved departing Saviour, the sweet influences of his grace, as well as the joyful assurance of blessedness hereafter.

The power of faith to uplift the soul, and fortify it against numberless depressing influences, is certainly not one of the least of the blessings of Christianity. Its power to irradiate the future with the *soft, calm* light of Hope, and to blunt the thorns of our pathway to the tomb—this is not one of the least of its blessings. It is not a blessing to be despised. It must not be thrown away. And yet whoever is bent to backsliding from God, throws it away. I may, on this point, appeal to your own consciousness. Leaving a Saviour, do you not, fellow Christian, also leave Christian enjoyment? Do you not leave the inspiring, buoyant influence of Hope? Even so. And what is the equivalent? Nay, rather let me ask, what is the *compensation?* Alas, what is it? Darkness in the soul, leanness, doubts, fears, compunction, the goads of conscience. The soul is no longer like a watered garden, but is a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. The burdens of life become more oppresive, while yet there are no everlasting arms underneath.

You, whose experience may have taught you how evil a thing it is, and bitter, to depart from Christ, may well inquire—

" Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?
What peaceful hours I then enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."

3. The last consequence which I have time to mention, relates to *the future world.* It takes hold of retribution. It is this, that unless you repent and do your first works, you must perish. There is no talismanic charm about the *name* of Christian, or about a *profession* of religion which can rescue the hopeless backslider. He must lie down like other sinners, under the wrath of God. Yes, beloved hearer, whoever among you are bent to backsliding from God, if you repent not, you cannot enter heaven. Think, then, of the possibility, after all, of your perishing—of the certainty of it, unless you repent. Nor is this all.

Connected with this consequence to yourselves, are melancholy consequences to the unconverted in your families, and in the community. How seldom a sinner repenteth, while the Church is far from God! How seldom!

What will then become of your impenitent children—of these beloved youth, these young men and young women, that love not the Lord Jesus Christ? What will become of these unconverted husbands and wives, *fathers* and *mothers*, who are not even thoughtful about their souls, and who will not be, until the backsliding of the Church is healed?

Indeed, it would seem that on the decision you make, relative to returning to God, hinges the salvation, not only of your *own* souls, but that of your dearest relatives and neighbours. It has well been said, that you are touching chords which will send their vibrations through eternity—holding, as it were, the heart-strings, not of the temporal life of *one* individual, but the immortality of many. Ponder this well. It will constitute, be assured, food of abundant reflection in another world.

And now, in closing, one word to my fellow sinners. In this discourse have been exhibited some of the marks by which to identify those who are bent to backsliding from God—the *guilt* of their condition and conduct, as also the *consequences* of it which prompt repentance can alone avert ; *consequences* to themselves personally, to their families, to the churches composed of them, and indirectly to *you*, inasmuch as your future turns, to a great extent, upon the fidelity or perfidy of the Church.

Now, has it not occurred to you to ask what your character is in the sight of a holy God—what your *guilt* is, and what your future must be, unless you escape to the Lord Jesus Christ ? If even Christian people fall into such guilt, so displease Jehovah, and bring wrath upon themselves, how must it be with you, who are not, like them, restrained by any attachment to the Saviour's person or cause, nor by any solemn vows of consecration, nor by any peculiar influences of guarding grace ? What a burden of guilt is yours were God to lay it now open upon your dormant conscience ? What a prospect, too, for eternity ? If God, has so much against professing Christians, for their worldliness, what must he have against you ? And if they will scarcely be saved—nay, if some of them will be disappointed in the final day, where will *you* appear ?

It is not indeed alleged against you that you are bent on backsliding. No. For you have never at all consecrated your hearts to God. But the allegation in your case is, that you permit your hearts to be *full of evil, only evil, and that continually*. Alas, how can you stand in the Judgment ? Not having devoted to your Saviour the least confidence, or affection,—no gratitude, no cheerful service, having lived solely for yourselves, repelling every felt obligation, admitting practically no allegiance to heaven, how can you endure to fall into the hands of an angry God ?

Consider well this solemn inquiry, " *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?*" *Yes ;* if the Redeemer, if holy angels, and their own consciences too, condemn Christians for withholding a *portion* only of their hearts from Christ, where will you appear who are altogether devoted to *self and sin.*

SERMON DCIX.

BY REV. G. A. CALHOUN, D.D.

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ADVANTAGES OF GOD'S GRACIOUS PRESENCE.

"And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."
EXODUS xxv. 8.

Were you to destroy your bibles, demolish your sanctuary, make common the Sabbath, close the lips of the preacher, and cause the the voice of prayer no more to be heard ; you would occasion a great diminution of present enjoyment. There are not a few, who take pleasure in reading the Bible. There are those who hail with joy the approaching Sabbath ; there are those who esteem it a blessed privilege to enter the courts of the Lord ; there are those, who would deeply regret a denial of the rights of baptism,and the Lord's Supper ; and there are those, who would hang their harps upon the willows, and mourn in bitterness, were they refused the privilege of prayer.

We see a company assembling for public worship, with anticipations of much satisfaction in the transactions before them. During the services of the occasion, we observe a fixed attention a glow of animation, an expression of joy excited by the presence of God. The assembly is dismissed, and many of them retire, having had a feast more satisfactory to them, than that of "a stalled ox." Look at that man, who seldom, if ever, enters the house of God ; has he enjoyment like this ?

We hear Christian friends in conversation. Now their theme is the perfections of Jehovah ; and admiration and joy swell their breasts. Now redeeming grace is their topic, and how mild and placid their countenances. Now they speak of the progress of the Gospel—the increase of the faithful—the success attending the cause of benevolence—and the final triumph of the cause of Christ ; and how elevated and celestial their feelings. Look at that man, who disregards religious institutions ; has he comforts like these ?

We now silently approach a dwelling. It is the dwelling of the pious. As we are about to tread the threshhold, the voice of prayer greets our ears. The father. and mother, and children, around their family altar, are on their knees before God. The fire of love is kindled in their breasts. The God of love is specially present. Their faces shine while they boldly intercede, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Look at the irreligious father, who spurns at the duty of family devotion; has his household peace and comfort like this?

To-day we meet a pious father. As he affectionately takes our hand, tears of joy flow from eyes unaccustomed to weep. What causes this overflowing of heart? Oh, his long lost child,—the child of his hopes, the child of his prayers, and the child of his tears,—is found. And found by him who came to seek and save that which is lost. Has the ungodly father joy like this?

We now walk in secret places, and what objects are these which we behold? Yonder is an aged pilgrim, wearied with the calls of the world, and the noise of her companions to the grave who has retired with her Bible to enjoy a season of undisturbed communion with God. Oh, how refreshing, how sweet to her taste this communion with her heavenly Father! Yonder, too, is a youth, who has recently been adopted into the family of God. He is presenting his thank-offering for converting grace, and pleading at the throne of mercy for his companions in sin. In the attitude of supplication, he lingers and pleads, and lingers and pleads. His lips break their silence. We hear him saying, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me"—except thou convert and save my companions. Look at those, who scoff at the religion of the cross; are they found in places so sacred, and in employments so delightful, so heavenly as these?

We now visit houses of affliction. Entering one, we find a man of forty-five. A short time since he was the picture of health. This man did not pray in his family. He did not frequent the house of God. To the sacredness of the Sabbath he paid but little attention. And for the support of religious institutions he made no sacrifices. Disease has grasped the springs of life, and in full strength he is writhing and groaning with tortures of body; and this is not all which renders the sight appalling. He is now brought to see himself in the hands of death, unprepared for the retributions of eternity. He entreats us to instruct him, and pray for him. And with a countenance terrific, a soul filled with anguish, and the darkness of despair gathering around him, his cries for pardon and salvation are incessant, until death closes the scene, and there is a great and awful silence. Well did wicked Balaam say. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But as afflictions are not confined to the families of the ungodly, we will enter another dwelling. Here we find an emaciated body, worn out with disease and distress. This person is a female, a tender plant; which has been watched, and nourished, with all the attention and solicitude of a fond mother's care; but the rough winds, and violent storms of death, are now beating upon her. Her eyes are sunk, her bosom heaves, her lips quiver—all, all bespeak the presence of the king of terrors.

And yet there is a meekness in her aspect, like the love of Jesus—there is a calmness, like a summer's evening—there is the stillness of peace—the softness of quietude—and the joy of bright prospects. We ask her, whence this triumph in death? She replies. God is dwelling with me; in him do I triumph. We ask her mother, who stands gazing on her dying child, how can you be so calm and cheerful in this heart-rending hour? She replies, God is dwelling with me—in his will do I rejoice. Tell me, oh, tell me, my hearers, did you ever witness a scene so affecting, so comforting, and so heavenly, in the dwellings of those, who neglect the institutions of our holy religion?

Religion, in the life that now is, presents its hundred-fold reward. And were all beyond the grave but an empty void; were death, when it dissolves the body, to annihilate the soul; we could not do too much in rearing a Sanctuary, that we might secure the presence of God among us.

We should not, however, omit to contemplete, for a moment, the benefits resulting from God's dwelling with a people, which they will experience in *the world to come.*

Life is a vapor, and time is but a narrow isthmus, separating eternity past from eternity future. Whatever are the blessings of God's special presence experienced in this world, compared with those to be experienced in the world of spirits, they are a drop to the ocean, an atom to the universe. Persons must rear a sanctuary, and thus secure the dwelling of God with them in this life, or they cannot dwell with him in the life to come. "And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is a privilege of those who attend on the means of grace with a cordial reliance on Christ for pardon and acceptance, to be delivered from a woe indescribable, a woe eternal—from the worm which never dieth, and from the fire which is never quenched. It is also their privilege to be like Christ, to be with Christ, to behold his glory, to taste of his love, and drink of the river of pleasure which issues from his throne forever and ever. Brethren, were there no present advantages derived from serving God—were our attempts to serve him attended with toil, disappointment and sorrow, with no one emotion of joy—were the wicked to be the people of prosperity, of undisturbed peace, and unalloyed comfort in this world; and were the righteous, as was their Saviour, to be forsaken in death: when faith presents us a vision of the miseries of the damned, and of the glories of the redeemed, we are prepared to say, Let us live the life, and die the death of the righteous, and let our last end be like his.

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SERMON DCX:

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HALF-DAY HEARERS.

" Let every man be swift to hear."—James i. 19.

A precious faculty is that of hearing, and in a multitude of ways it is a source of delight to us all. Pleasant to us are the sounds even of inanimate nature—of zephyrs that sigh softly over banks of flowers; of brooks that glide with gentle murmur along their rocky channels; of mighty winds that sweep over forest-crowned mountains; of old ocean pealing forth the gravest notes of the universal anthem. The varied minstrelsy of birds, those dear relics of Eden; the hum of bees and the lowing of herds,—nay even the hoarse baying of the watch-dog, have all, in their several methods and measures, a power and a charm for us. Dearer still are the tones that fall from human lips,—the accents of friendship,—the utterances of parental love,—the voices of children,—the notes of " men-singers and women-singers,"

" With many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,"—

the "words that breathe and thoughts that burn," of those who have the gift of a lofty and commanding eloquence. A golden gate, surely, is that of the town of Mansoul, which Bunyan has made so prominent in his famous old allegory of the Holy War.

But of all the many sorts of hearing, that which is most important, and which should be most highly prized by us, is the hearing of God's Word. Large provision has God made for it. An order of men is instituted, a day is appointed, the better to secure this privilege. The noise of business is hushed, its clamorous demands are suspended, a peace typifying that of heaven overspreads the land, that God may speak to man, and that man may listen to God. The shedding of the Saviour's blood hath secured this boon; blessed memories of Gethsemane and Calvary woo men to the sanctuary. "Swift to hear" in other relations they may well show themselves—to listen to words of kindness, to expositions of science, to counsels of human wisdom; but swifter should they be to hear the glorious Gospel of the Son of God. It is not a vain thing for them, it is their life. For "faith cometh by hearing." It begins thus, and thus commonly it springs up toward perfection. It is they only "that be planted in the house of the Lord," that "shall flourish like the palm-tree," that "shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." The most eminent servants of God in every age have understood this. Their language has been like that of David, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

There is, however, a class of persons in our religious congregations—some of them have been recognized even within the pale of the Church—whose temper is obviously of quite an opposite sort. The terms of my statement intimate that they do not utterly forsake the sanctuary; nay, they ordinarily suffer no Sabbath to pass without resorting to it. But their thirst for its privileges seems to be easily slaked. A single service is apt to suffice. They may be properly characterized as *half-day hearers.* Their "goodness" is too literally "as a *morning* cloud and the *early* dew." In respect to the afternoon service, they do but illustrate negatively the precept of our text. It is of these HALF-DAY HEARERS I propose to discourse.

Yet let me not be supposed to speak without discrimination. Far be it from me to ignore in this relation, providential hindrances. Aged persons there are, whose infirmity makes even a single visit to the house of God a great Sabbath labor. Persons of all classes are liable to the assaults of disease. It is indeed somewhat remarkable, that attacks of this sort should happen so often upon the Sabbath. How are we to account for these hebdomadal visitations? To what occult influence shall we ascribe it, that just as holy time begins, cruel rheumatisms tighten their grasp, and hoarse colds clog the channels of respiration, and crushing headaches settle down upon the brain? Can it be that *the God of* this world has still some partial power over the bodies of men, and by a natural exercise of his malignity makes this the time of his sorest inflictions? Or is the cause to be found in some hidden physical force, some mysterious working of the law of periodicity? If the inquiry is to take this direction, it may well call into exercise the keenest sagacity of the medical faculty. Nor should they overlook the question, to what peculiar atmospheric or other influence it is owing, that a malady neglected during the week, is found to be most advantageously treated on the Sabbath day—that just that day is discovered to be most favorable to the operation of the pills or powders, the tinctures or decoctions which a particular case is judged to require. We cannot but suspect, however, that the cause sought for lies below the sphere of merely physical agencies. Its seat, we fear, is in the province of the spiritual. Yet there are visitations of disease, we know, neither fancied nor welcomed, which must needs keep their subjects from the sanctuary. Some, too, must attend upon the sick, and others must watch over helpless infancy. We utter, in regard to this subject no sweeping condemnation; nay, we are slow to judge of particular cases, we would ever exercise in regard to them that charity which "thinketh no evil," and which "hopeth all things." We would be guilty of no rude or impertinent meddling with men's private affairs; least of all would we trench upon the rights which pertain in this matter to the individual conscience. We speak not of those whose justification is in the limitations of Providence, or in the imperative claims of duty. Let none who on such grounds stand absolved from censure, regard this discourse as intended for them. It touches the case of those only who err in heart, who are defaulters from the lack not of good opportunities, but of right affections. There are few of this class, I am happy to believe, in the congregation before me. Yet even here some possibly may need a word of admonition; and besides, "the prudent man foreseeth the evil." Be the present, as it may, it is well to guard ourselves, to the utmost, against possible lapses and delinquencies in the future. We pass then, to present, in various aspects, the case of him, who both in heart and habit merits the appellation of a *half-day hearer*.

I. I observe then, first, *he himself incurs great loss*. A greater, it should be remembered, from the fact, that the course he takes is quite in accordance with his inclinations. He who is reluctantly kept from the house of God, is, indeed, deprived of a most valuable privilege; yet, if his heart be there, He whose service he delights in, will not leave him unblessed. Partial amends, at least, may be made, in the joys and advantages of private devotion, and in his fervent communion with the assembled worshippers. No such compensation has the man who is willingly absent from the ministration of the word. Rather than curtail the means of grace, he should give them enlargement. Instead of half a Sabbath a week, he needs the sunshine of two Sabbaths, to warm his frozen heart, to tempt upward the drooping pinions of his faith. Little enough for any one, indeed, are all the ordinary services of holy time. It is a long eternity, filled with momentous scenes, for which the Sabbath is a preparation. A fearful host of outward enemies have we to contend with, a still more terrible array of inward foes. Often, then, should we resort to that great spiritual armory, the sanctuary. Often should be heard there

> "The clink of hammers closing rivets up."

If the half-day hearer is an unconverted man, our argument assumes a special urgency. In the simple language of one who was always in his place in church, he knows not "when the *saving word* will be preached." The very sermon he fails to hear, may be just that which was particularly suited to his case, which would have removed, under God, the only remaining barrier to his conversion. God dispenses his Spirit as a Sovereign, it is true; but not without regard to the relations and fitnesses of things. Much depends, too, in impressing the heart, upon the repetition of influences, upon keeping the truth continuously before the mind. There must be a succession of drops to wear away the rock; there must be precept upon precept to save the soul. Many a man we cannot doubt, to whom the afternoon's discourse would have been as the clinching of the already driven nail, has been kept out of heaven by being kept out of church. The god of this world understands this matter; and has a fiendish delight, unquestionably, in empty seats. The Christian, too, may lose by absence, just what he peculiarly needs. It may be the resolving of some obstinate perplexity; or the removal of some overshadowing doubt; or the soothing of some deep wound of sorrow; or the detecting of some latent sin; or the guarding of the soul against some specious temptation; or the shedding down of light upon some dimly discerned path of duty, or point of doctrine; or the opening up of a broad vista into the glories of heaven. Every wise Pastor has his plans of discourse. He cannot be always preaching on the same theme; and just the service from which you are needlessly absent, may be the predetermined one, and the only one for a long period, in which he may lay himself out to meet exactly your case. There are, besides, connections between different discourses; and that, often, when no formal series is either announced or undertaken. As the absence of a pupil at a single lesson unfits him for those that succeed, so he who loses a single sermon may lack a very desirable preparation, both of mind and heart, for whatever is to follow. For thine own sake, then, my hearer,—to make the most of the priceless privileges of the Sanctuary—to guard against losses for which no earthly gains can be an equivalent, and which the future can never retrieve,—give to God not only a

half but a whole day's service. "Be swift to hear," the afternoon's discourse, as well as the morning's.

——"Think, when the bells do chime,
'Tis angels' music. * * * *
God then deals blessings: if a king did so,
Who would not haste, nay give, to see the show?
Twice on the day his due is understood;
For, all the week, thy food so oft he gave thee.
Thy cheer is mended; 'bate not of the food,
Because 'tis better, and perhaps may save thee."

II. The man who is willingly a half-day hearer *proclaims the Sabbath a weariness.* An unequivocal indication of a man's state and prospects, is the estimation in which he holds this day of God. "A day in thy courts," said David—not *half* a day, observe—"is better than a thousand." A like judgment, as we have already intimated, have holy men of all ages pronounced. Differing widely in other points, they have had little difference in this. The feeling of them all is well expressed by quaint old Herbert:

"O day most calm, most bright!
The fruit of this, the next world's bud;
Th' endorsement of supreme delight,
Writ by a friend, and with his blood;
The couch of time; care's balm and bay:
The week were dark, but for thy light;
Thy torch doth show the way."

By another class, however, quite an opposite view has been taken. It was boldly uttered by some of old. "When will the New Moon be gone," they said, "that we may sell corn, and the Sabbath that we may set forth wheat?" Few now would speak thus unequivocally, especially under a profession of piety. Yet does not conduct speak? The Sabbath is not a private, but a public affair. Public worship is its chief and most characteristic service. He who is habitually done with that service when the sun has reached the meridian—who ignores whatever may remain of it—who spends the rest of the day, so far, at least as the ministry of the Word is concerned, as if holy time were ended, looks he not coldly on the whole Sabbatical Ordinance? What can he be understood to mean, but that it is irksome to him—that he would have as little of it as possible—that he is well pleased when it is over? How unlike is he to the man in whose view all its sands are more precious than those of old Pactolus, or the modern land of gold; and its last sands the most precious of all.

In this weariness of the Sabbath, it is worthy of special note, men declare themselves weary of the Gospel message that comes with it. In this direction, the example of the half-day attendant is specially eloquent. All over his vacant seat, as the neglected service opens, is written in most visible characters, "No more of the old pulpit routine—of sin, of ruin, of atonement, of faith, of salvation! Enough, for one day, of Gethsemane of Calvary, of 'the Lamb, as it had been slain!' Discourse as the preacher may, of the woes of perdition, of the bliss of heaven, of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, it shall have no attraction for me. Let the task of the morning purchase me a welcome release for the rest of the day." Instead of being "swift to hear," such an one, even when he sits in the sanctuary, is little better than a deaf man.

III. Men of this class declare by their conduct, I remark again, *that mere earthly gratifications are superior to heavenly.* It is the joy which perishes, that lures them from the joy divine. I will not speak of those who, having done penance by sitting through the morning sermon, dash by us on a ride of pleasure, not only breaking the Sabbath themselves, but disregarding God's benevolent ordinance touching the brute creation—putting themselves on a level with those "fast" men with their fast "cattle," who could hardly tell you how the interior of a church is constructed. Some there are, who leave their places in God's house vacant, that they may make pleasant calls of friendship; that they may take their fill, while the pressure of business is intermitted, of multifarious gossip. The ruddy glow of the cheerful anthracite fire, or the gentle summer's warmth of the well attempered furnace, the luxurious lounge, and the pleasant faces and voices of the family group—potent pleas these last, nay, all these, properly considered, for faithful church-going—may yet, in many cases, be prevalent inducements to an abridgment of that duty. Nor are inferior competitions wanting. The Sabbath, it is averred, is not a fast-day; it is a joyful occasion, it is a high festival. A festival for the soul it truly is; but some, keeping a brute's Sabbath, make it a feast-day for the body. On other days, perhaps, such gratifications are omitted, for all potent business hinders; but less potent religion does not forbid it on this. There might be time for it, indeed, in the interval of worship; but then it must not be crowded. Religion may be crowded, the sermon can hardly be too laconic; but, for the spreading of the cloth, and the dispatching of the several courses, there must be ample time. The church-bell, with its distasteful clangor, must not interfere with those gentle tinklings that summon waiting epicureans to their groaning altar. What rivalry have we often here; and how severely does it try some who would not wholly repudiate the Sabbath. The viands are savory; it may not be so with the preaching. The material condiments are good; it may possibly be otherwise with the rhetorical. Of the carnal feast so temptingly spread out, there can be no question; but there is more than a doubt in regard to the Gospel feast. The carnal feast prevails. Or if there be no interference in point of time, but a poor preparation is a surfeit for a sermon. Many a lover of good cheer has been kept from the sanctuary by the post-prandial disabilities which he has diligently and unscrupulously imposed on himself. It could hardly be expected that swiftness to hear should characterize such a person.

IV. The half-day hearer, I remark further, *puts the business of this world above the things of religion.* No half-way work is there, commonly, in the prosecution of secular schemes. The service done for mammon, is no easy forenoon's divertisement. It would be a strange thing to see our mechanics leaving their workshops, and our merchants their counting rooms, and our professional men their offices, just as the sun begins his daily declination, saying, "The morning hours must suffice for toil and for gain." Whole-day workers are the great mass of our citizens. It is no marvel if the evening shades find them still at their post. It is no strange thing if business, in some of its forms, makes long strides towards the "noon of night." We say not this in the way of reprehension. There may, it is true, be excess in secular labors; but there must be diligence. In an age, and especially in a city like this, thrift, we are sure, is not for the man of slack hand. We only insist, that the measure of devotedness to religion, shall not fall below the prevailing type and standard of worldly efficiency. We only ask, that if the secular market-day is to be wholly kept, there should be a like keeping of the market-day of the soul. We only aver, that he who improves most faithfully every hour of the former while a moiety of the latter quite satisfies him—a moiety at least of its most important privileges—gives but too clear an indication of his preference for the things of earth, and most sadly underrates the great realities of eternity.

Sickness, as we have said, may cut short Sabbath opportunities. But what if this be the effect of sickness that would not restrain from business? A noble rule is that of some godly men, to be kept from public worship by no ailment which would not keep them from their ordinary employments. There are fierce storms, I know. But what if through them all you make your way to the place of trade, or of amusement, or of social enjoyment? Are storms harder to meet with your faces churchward? Distance may try your fidelity. But does it forbid your stated visits to the scene of worldly occupations? In that regard as prudent men you make calculations beforehand. You tolerate no distance which you may not regularly overcome. If we would not, by our example, disparage divine things, if, in the Scripture sense, we would be "swift to hear," we must put our Sabbath-keeping, in all these relations, on at least as high a platform as the keeping of our week-days.

V. The course of the half-day hearer, I observe again, has a strong tendency *to hinder the cause of Christ.* He harms not himself alone, but many others. He injures those who copy, as some will, the pattern he holds forth. A chilling and discouraging influence does he pour upon the heart of the preacher. I would, my brethren, you could understand how the spirit of the Pastor faints within him, at times, as he gazes upon empty seats—especially if they be seats which he knows have holders, but which are apt to lack occupants. Weary hours, perhaps midnight hours, he has toiled in his study. He has sought, like the "Preacher" of old, "to find out acceptable words," and "words of truth"—words which shall be "as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given by one Shepherd,"—even the gracious Shepherd divine. Hoping for the blessing of God on his message, he enters the pulpit. But lo, the persons for whose conversion, or for whose growth in grace he has been led peculiarly to long—persons of the very class to which his discourse is specially suited—are many of them not in their places. He would not think uncharitably of the absent, yet he cannot but think of them sorrowfully. So far as they are concerned he has labored in vain; and it is no marvel if the depressing conviction of it should impair somewhat his usefulness to others. Ministers ought indeed, to be raised by faith above all disheartening influences. Yet they are but men; at the best they have not a seraph's fire. They need the influence of concurrent and enlivening ardors around them. Nothing is so great a help to them, short of the grace of God, as swiftness to hear. Scarce any thing is so like mountains of ice upon them as vacant seats.

Nor is the influence unhappy upon the preacher alone. It is matter of common observation, that feeling, other things being equal, is likely to be deepest when the greatest number of persons are present. The reason of this fact it is not difficult to state; it comes of the natural play and interchange of human sympathies. Fully and felicitously has Archbishop Whately elucidated this point. "Almost any one," he says, "is aware of the *infectious* nature of any emotion excited in a large assembly. It may be compared to the increase of sound by a number of echoes, or of light, by a number of mirrors, or to the blaze of a heap of firebrands, each of which would speedily have gone out if kindled separately, but which when thrown together, help to kindle each other." What then, I add, if half the echoing crags are taken away, or a large part of the mirrors are wanting, or a considerable number of the firebrands are removed? Of sound, light, heat, there must be a proportional diminution. Just so must feeling be diminished, if, while the case in other respects remains the same, you diminish the number of those who are expected to feel. Especially is this the fact, if hearers are absent, whose presence was looked for. The heart is chilled the more by the force of contrast, and the feeling of disappointment. Let it never be forgotten, then, by him who is needlessly away from his place in the sanctuary, that as surely as the abstraction of fuel from the furnaces below us, tends to throw a wintry influence over our physical frames, so surely does his lack of attendance conduce to a moral frigidity in those who are present. The laws of mind, in this regard, are settled and immutable. I need only suggest, in addition to all this, the reproach cast upon a particular congregation, in the eyes of strangers at least, by empty pews, and a sparse audience,—the reproach upon its ministry, its brotherhood, its office-bearers, its private members—upon all that pertains to it.

VI. I remark finally, it is the saddest fact in the history of the half-day hearer, that *he dishonors God.* It is the temple of the Most High from which he turns away. It is the ministry of the divine Redeemer, he so lightly esteems. It is the blessed day of God, the day which commemorated at first the work of creation, and which commemorates now the greater work of redemption, he so grudgingly regards. Of all days, the Sabbath is fullest of God—it is ever, in a spiritual sense,

"The bridal of the earth and sky."

It is the grand audience day of the King of kings. Of all its privileges none bear more clearly the seal of Jehovah, none are more fragrant with the love of Immanuel, than the services of the sanctuary. It is not merely because the half-day attendant harms his own soul, and the souls of the people, while he fills with sadness the heart of his Pastor, that we would urge upon him the injunction of our text. It is because his Maker calls for his homage, and will not hold him guiltless, if he but sparingly renders it. "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts." "Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

But it is time, my hearers, I consign this subject to your private meditations. We cannot but be thankful, that whatever uses it may have among us, are to so great an extent of a merely prevenient character. Were they wholly so, it would be no lost labor to magnify, as we have now done, the blessed ordinances of the Sabbath. Let the young, in this respect, form their habits aright. Let us all see to it, that ours be no half-hearted, or half-completed observance of those ordinances. As, on the day of God, the New Jerusalem cometh down to us, its pearly gates glittering in our view, its seraphic symphonies floating around us, let us be eager to gaze, let us be "swift to hear." Instead of wishing to shorten holy time, or to abridge its privileges, let us be waiting and longing, rather, for its lapse into the everlasting Sabbath.

EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM.

1.

LORD of the worlds above,
How pleasant and how fair
The dwellings of thy love,
Thine earthly temples are!
To thine abode
My heart aspires,
With warm desires
To see my God.

2.

The sparrow for her young
With pleasure seeks a nest;
And wandering swallows long
To find their wonted rest:
My spirit faints
With equal zeal,
To rise and dwell
Among thy saints.

3.

O happy souls that pray
Where God appoints to hear!
O happy men that pay
Their constant service there!
They praise thee still;
And happy they
That love the way
To Zion's hill.

4.

They go from strength to strength,
Through this dark vale of tears,
Till each arrives at length,
Till each in heaven appears.
O glorious seat,
When God our King
Shall thither bring
Our willing feet!

SERMON DCXI.

BY REV. J. T. TUCKER.

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PROFITLESS HEARING.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."—JAMES i. 22.

The necessity of good *preaching* is well understood among men. The importance of *good hearing* is not so well understood. To render the message effective, it is not enough that *the former* be furnished. Some most excellent preachers have been very unsuccessful. Noah was a faithful bearer of God's message to the thousands of the old world; but his own little household alone heeded his warnings. Isaiah and Ezekiel were distinguished servants of God. Endowed with prophetic vision, with splendid powers of eloquence, enkindled to supernatural brilliance and force by the spirit of inspiration, they went forth on their arduous errand well qualified to meet its high demands. Like their noble compeers and successors they were fearless proclaimers of truth. The throned monarch, the oppressor amid his servile instruments of cruelty, the faithless pastors who devoured God's helpless flock, the doers of iniquity, wherever found, each heard the accusation of his guiltiness and ill-desert, without a word of smooth palliation or mistimed excuse. But the one of these most accomplished heralds from heaven was left to exclaim, over the stone-like apathy of his hearers, "Lord, who hath believed our report?"—and the other, though to the children of his people "like the very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," was compelled to carry back to his Master the complaint, "they hear thy words, but they do them not." And yet another preacher of salvation there was, who "spake as never man spake." From his divine lips truth distilled as the dew. The words of life were in his mouth, clothed in the perfection of clear illustration, conclusive argument, pointed application, melting persuasiveness. But did the crowds, who wondered after the miracles of Jesus, yield to his counsels, his claims? How radiantly did that "light shine in darkness; yet the darkness comprehended it not."

Good preaching is important. It cannot be too faultless. But be it as faultless as was the preaching of the Son of God, a man may sit under it and go from it, totally unbenefitted. As in the graphic similitude of the Apostle in our context—he may be "like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." So with him who is merely a hearer of the word. It leaves on his heart the impression, not of the seal upon the plastic wax; but such an impression as the face makes upon the mirror which for a moment reflects its features—transient as the glancing sunbeam.

In all unproductive hearing of God's word there is a delusion, a self-deception. Thus in the text, "deceiving your own selves." That is, as the great object of the preaching of Christianity is *obedience*—he grossly deceives himself, who supposes that to hear and not to obey can be of any possible use to him.

It therefore, becomes an imperative duty to keep clearly before the minds of our hearers their liability to the danger of rendering the gospel ministry wholly ineffectual for good to themselves. To give definiteness and individuality to this admonition, I shall now point out several classes of persons, who hear the gospel in such a spirit as to make it inoperative, and consequently useless.

I. *The vacant hearer.*

God's word is weighty truth. Its topics are God's nature, acts, the human soul, its condition, responsibilities, destiny. The subjects of its principal concern lie not on the surface of things, to be grasped without an effort. Religion has, indeed, its simple rudiments of truth: so has it too, and that of vital moment to us, its depths—and heights of most precious wisdom. But whether simple or recondite, its teachings will teach him nothing, who will not meet that demand of intellectual attention which instruction on any theme necessarily imposes on the learner. Take your place in the lecture-room of the demonstrator of some section of natural science. Will a listless, half-averted, dreamy indifference answer to the comprehending of the wonders and beauties of a material philosophy? Are adepts thus made in the mysteries of earth? Open a volume, profound or even superficial, and some amount of consideration you must give its pages, if you will possess yourself of its contents. But men frequent the sanctuary, as though there were some power of local, mechanical sanctification within its walls, which makes needless any tax upon the energies of their spiritual nature. They leave all but their bodies elsewhere. You can see it in their whole appearance—heavy, inert, now asleep, now courting slumber by a more easy posture,—while vainly the preacher exhausts his resources to electrify their apathy with some arousing thoughts of God, of redemption, of eternity.

There are many such vacant listeners in God's house. With some, it is a constitutional mental sluggishness, a mind untaught to reflect. But with many more, it is an aversion of heart to religious thought, which arms the will against it. Add also the many who bring the world with them into Jehovah's temple, and there worship mammon instead of God. They close, it is true, their houses of merchandise, their offices, their work-shops, on Saturday night. But the worldliness of their spirit receives no check. The transactions of the former week, the plans in prospect, play before his vision. He is solving some problem of secular gain, while the preacher is trying to solve for him the worth of the soul and its salvation. A handful of precious seed has been cast upon his heart,—but from it, hard and impenetrable as the trodden road-side, the devil has plucked it away without an effort.

II. *The curious hearer.*

This spirit brings the attention to bear upon a subject, but merely to dissect, to criticise. It is an active spirit, far removed from the unconcernedness of the vacant hearer, and the sanctuary affords a favorite scene for its exercise. It may employ itself upon the *subject* of discourse, and enjoy the pleasure of remarking the beauties, the well-timed proprieties of its presentation; or, more commonly, it may busy itself with taking exceptions at the taste, or the judgment, which has guided the selection or treatment of the theme. This, though sanctioned by inspiration, may be too trite, or unimportant, or inclegant for its cultivated sensibilites. If it be a message of Christian doctrine or duty, which will not abate its pressing hold on the conscience, or conceal the dark shadows of ruin which threaten the disobedient; if it re-echoes fearfully an unrepealed law, or cuts to the quick some cherished sin; the hearer wonders superciliously at the exceedingly bad taste of the minister. He came to the sanctuary to be entertained by an eloquent oration, or a finely-drawn description, or a well-proportioned moral lecture. He encounters there, God's flaming sword guarding the way of holiness. He does not see why these so oft recurring, gloomy subjects might not give place to some more cheering topics, something which should interest the intellect without assaulting the heart.

Or, the attention fastens itself upon the *manner* of the preacher, forgetful from whose court the speaker holds his commission, and what words of life and death hang on his lips. He stands before his auditor for no higher purpose than to display his proficiency in modes and styles of elocution, his knowledge of the springs which excite and allay the passions. To such an one, he occupies no loftier ground than does the actor of an hour. He opens his theme, while the curious mind busies itself with a thousand minute matters of language, illustration, gesture, intonation, attitude. The period of worship passes. The house of God is any thing to that soul, but the gate of heaven. The mighty concerns of judgment and of mercy, have left no traces on that memory. No advance towards obedience has been made by him thus occupied in gleaning wherewith to exercise his critical acumen. These, in their idle diversion, like the prophet's hearers, have not perceived that a herald from God has been among them. I would by no means undervalue the graces, the accomplishments of pulpit discourse. But he who refuses a truthful message because of their absence, does a thing not less preposterous than he, who needing to have a limb amputated to prevent mortification, should object to the surgeon's knife because its polish did not equal its sharpness; or, sinking in deep water, should refuse a rescuing hand, because not decorated with a perfumed glove.

III. *The captious hearer.*

Here, the attention is excited, only to be turned against the teachings of religion. There are those who occasionally attend upon God's worship, as they sometimes read his word, for no other end but to cavil, to deny, to oppose. Their errand, prompted by a deep hostility to Christian doctrine, is to find occasion for blame, to detect inconsistencies, or to invent them, in the statements of the preacher. They come, armed in the panoply of skepticism, to refute, to their own satisfaction at least, whatever may conflict with their loose notions of what is, and ought to be. Their business is just what was that of some in former days, in whose hearts Satan reigned; who followed Christ's ministrations for the—shall I say, magnanimous or pitiful purpose—*to catch him in his words!* And they achieve their desire, if some defective exhibition of truth, some unguarded expression, or improper act can be carried away from the sanctuary, to be added to their stock of small vituperation against the faith of Jesus.

But sometimes, where the mind likes not to confess itself skeptical upon the *subject* of Christian doctrine, it covers its hostility to this, by a very ingenious, not ingenuous transfer of its dislikes to the announcer of this doctrine. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was the haughty inquiry of certain of Christ's hearers, who would as surely have rejected an evangelical Christianity, though Christ had preached it from the throne of David. Yes, how often does the rebellious will refuse to be instructed, on like frivolous pretences, because of some causeless offence against the accredited ambassador of God. Such feelings of opposition to the principles and claims of piety will utterly destroy all profitable results from an attendance upon the ministry of the Gospel.

IV. *The fashionable hearer.*

Of all tyrants, public taste is the most capricious. Though oftenest it holds the services of the purer churches of Christ as quite outside its domain, sometimes it extends its patronage even to these, and brings around their altars its obsequious servants. Under certain causes, the house of Jehovah's true worship becomes the thronged resort of those whose haunts of pleasure lie in widely diverse directions. The popularity of the preacher, the tastefulness or splendor of the edifice, the charms of music, or because some family of wealth or distinction has led the way; these influences have given bent to public feeling; and as the Sabbath bell announces the opening of God's temple, thither flows a willing multitude, whose remotest wish it would be to meet a present Deity. They have arrayed themselves, not in a meek and heavenly temper, to commune with God—but in the decorations of vanity, to be observed of men. Their preparation was not of the closet, to gain access to the mercy-seat, but of the toilet, to bear comparison with others as vain as they. The Sabbath is welcomed, as it helps them to show off an equipage more elegant than some rival's; or to display to advantage their personal attractions. Their own proud selves are the centres round which every thought revolves. What matters it to them what theme employs the preacher's powers; in what strains of devout supplication Divine goodness and majesty are invoked? Not one imagination soars higher than their own appearance; not one weightier reflection crosses their minds than the impression which their presence is making on the beholders. Will this kind of hearing the words of God, profit aught the soul?

V. *The speculating hearer.*

I use this phrase in its mercantile sense, to indicate those whose selfishness leads them to make a pecuniary gain of godliness. Do not regard me as bearing false witness against my neighbor, when I say that they have many imitators, who anciently bought and sold in the Temple, whose covetous greed Christ rebuked, saying—"Take these things hence; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." These visit the sanctuary to further their business facilities. It is respectable to attend divine worship. He is marked with distrust who complies not with the established custom. The influential, the wealthy, the intelligent, are found there, at least *once* on the Sabbath. He must stand fair in the eyes of such; his commercial or professional success requires it. And he submits to the irksomeness of a weekly visit to this uncongenial spot, as a cheap price for the custom, the patronage of the community. On the whole, it is to him a fair business transaction. For the same reason, in a different society, he would frequent the theatre and the race-course, and with far more congeniality of taste.

A similar conduct is theirs, who sustain the gospel because of the pecuniary value of churches and ministers to any community. These have their secular advantages. But to uphold the institutions of religion *merely* to enhance the value of property, to lure thitherward the enterprising, and roll here or there the tide of wealth and population, is to cast great disrespect upon religion and its great object. Truth and piety should be prized for more spiritual reasons than these. They refuse their choicest blessings to such sordid calculators. He, whose attachment for Christianity has no higher spring than his own emolument thereby, who is a friend of the sanctuary no further than this befriends his secular interests, may get gold by his outside devoutness, but never that wisdom which is more precious than rubies.

VI. *The self-forgetful hearer.*

There is no more lovely grace than self-forgetfulness at the right time. But, under the searching, personal applications of the truth of God, to be thus oblivious of our own existence and state, while the whole attention is absorbed in others, this surely is a most misplaced charitableness. But thus it is. Many never listen to a sermon which "reproves, rebukes, exhorts," for their own benefit. They may indeed listen; but it is with a keen sense of their neighbor's defects, not their own; with a keen enjoyment of the admirable fitness of this censure or that admonition to a friend here, or an acquaintance there. In *one* way, at least, they practice sufficiently by the rule—'it is better to give than to receive.' Whether the preacher dilates upon the duties owed to God or man; whether the sins or the foibles of his congregation, domestic or social, be his theme of animadversion; from seat to seat the message is passed along with astonishing disinterestedness, scarce finding, like Noah's dove, a resting-place for the sole of its foot. If these liberal bestowers upon others of truth intended for them, needed by them most imperatively, were half as liberal in imparting of their abundance of earthly blessings to the objects of a true benevolence—if, when Christian philanthropy makes its appeals, they were half as forgetful of their private wants, conveniences, luxurious indulgences, many a widow's and orphan's heart would sing for joy; many a halting enterprize of missionary toil would move on with the tread of a giant. This is one of the most profitless methods of hearing; and it is the more to be lamented as many a professed Christian—alas, how many! is thus putting his famishing soul in peril of utter starvation.

VII. *The prayerless hearer.*

God alone can make the soul wise to salvation. Intellectual application may open to you the secrets of science; oratorical skill may suffice to sway your will to human endeavors. But where a depraved heart comes in to control that will, a greater than human power must give to right and duty the victory. By force of mental application, you may comprehend the philosophy of religion, may perceive its object, admire its symmetry, but to inform the understanding with Christian doctrine, is by no means of course to imbue the heart with their love. Hence, theoretic orthodoxy and growing impenitency so often advance hand in hand. Hence, the hardening hearts, the sensual, godless desires, frequenting our Christian temples. We marvel not at this, when we know that the Spirit of God can alone convert the soul, and that these hearers, however intellectually enlightened, have never sincerely prayed for that renewing energy to be exerted upon their natures. Without this influence, the truths of the Gospel may teach some lessons of morals and general prudence, but they will never guide the affections to God, the soul to holiness. Without prayer, earnest, habitual, personal, God's Spirit will not visit your bosom with life-imparting grace. A prayerless hearer of truth must, therefore, be an unblessed hearer. He turns the ministry of mercy into a ministry of condemnation. His soul, unfertilized from above, will never become a "garden of spices," like the trees of the Lord's planting.

And in this same prayerlessness of Christians in the house of God is to be found the chief cause why the faithful sermons of years advance them so little in the life of godliness, affect so feebly the character of their daily actions.

VIII. *The unresolved hearer.*

The communications of God to man all relate to *action*. They direct to *duty*. They aim not to amuse, to surprise, or merely to instruct, but to produce a voluntary movement of man's moral powers in the path by them indicated. They bring their unseen influences to bear upon his rational faculties to secure compliance with their demands, and in effecting, by God's grace, this object, they secure the salvation of his soul. But this they never do effect, except through his deliberate purpose of willing obedience.

This purpose of the soul to follow unresistingly wherever the truth may point, belongs pre-eminently *to the hearing* of the word. If it be not formed under the impressions its earnest proclamation makes on the conscience, scarce a possibility is there that this resolve will be formed under the faint and fading recollections of those solemn appeals. My hearers, a fearful responsibility rests on you, as you sit from Sabbath to Sabbath beneath the teachings and expostulations of this sacred spot. Here you are summoned to a life of conformity to God's will. On this turns your eternal state. But *your* will must freely meet his claim. Accident will not make you Christians. Preaching will not do it. God will not do it, without your active co-operation. It is not enough to confess the truth against yourself; to feel its condemning force ; to weep in the prospect of impending judgments. You may have done this often, but yet your soul bows not in submission and love. You may as often repeat it, but, unless under the power of truth thus impressed, you resolve in God's strength, *to do* all that the Lord your God requires of you, be it to cut off a right hand, or to pluck out a right eye, your hearing will be in vain. Solemn as you may feel in the sanctuary, if you cross its threshold undecided to be *a doer* of the word, the first half-hour of intercourse with the world will probably drive away all your seriousness, as it has a thousand times, leaving your heart, like metal heated and cooled, harder than before.

In conclusion, beloved hearers, let me earnestly press the exhortation of my text upon each of your consciences—*Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only!* Involve not yourselves in the miserable self-deceptions and ultimate self-destruction of such a profitless attendance upon the ministrations of the Gospel. Bear upon your soul this thrillingly impressive thought, that whomsoever the Gospel blesses not with salvation, it will curse with a fearfully increased condemnation. If Christ had not come and spoken to you, you would have been comparatively sinless. But what will be the end of those who obey nor His words, preached to them with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven?

Remember also *this*, that from whatever motives, with whatever dispositions you come to the sanctuary, God has a perfect perception of them all. Upon no spot under the face of heaven does his eye rest with a closer scrutiny, than upon the congregations of his professed worshippers. Alas! what profaning of that which is holy does he behold, as that glance reads the hearts of thousands of these weekly frequenters of his tabernacles. Hearer, what has God seen, what sees he now in your bosom? Which of all these sinful methods of hearing his truth has he charged against your name, as sermon after sermon has fallen vainly on your ear, and borne up its report of failure to heaven? Fellow sinner, as you would not meet in every one of these sermons the face of an accuser at the final day to convict you of the lifelong crime of rebellion against God's tenderest mercies, his most righteous claims, I entreat you, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only."

SERMON DCXII.

BY REV. EMERSON DAVIS, D. D.,

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HEAVEN ENTERED THROUGH CHRIST THE DOOR.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."—JOHN x. 1.

From the use our Saviour made of this remark, we are at no loss about its meaning. He calls himself the door through which heaven is entered, and teaches us that those who seek for admission in any other way, will not only fail of accomplishing their purpose, but will incur great guilt and expose themselves to a severer condemnation. As the man who seeks to enter a sheepfold in a clandestine manner, or in a way that one who had a right to enter would not, is presumed to have some evil intentions; so those who would enter heaven in some other way than through the door, are regarded as unwilling to be indebted to Christ for their salvation.

The text teaches, that we must be saved by Christ, if at all, and that sinners are desirous of securing eternal life in some other way.

I shall endeavor to describe the feelings of an awakened sinner at different stages of his conviction, and to show that he is aiming all the while to climb up in some other way.

I. Consider what he does when his attention is first arrested by the Holy Spirit. A ray of light has darted into his mind, and he feels wretched and miserable. He is arraigned before the bar of his own conscience and condemned. He not only knows that he has sinned, but he feels a consciousness of guilt. He cannot rest; his soul is disquieted; he has a fearful looking-for of judgment. Many, and perhaps most of you have at some period of life, been in this state of mind. Some of you turned back to a state of indifference and soon forgot what manner of persons you were, and some after being driven from every hiding place, finally came to Christ. You did not when first convicted of sin flee immediately to him, but you attempted to climb up in some other way. You sought to secure the favor of God and pardoning mercy by breaking off from some outward acts of wickedness. If you had desecrated the Sabbath, used profane language, or were addicted to any bad habit you resolved to reform, to put away the evil of your doings. As the master of a ship, engaged in the smuggling trade, when in fear of being taken, throws his goods overboard, so you began to put away your sins, though they were dear to you as a right hand or eye—you hoped thus to bring relief to a guilty conscience.

Some never go farther than this; they find the habits of sin so strong, that they conclude to indulge therein a little longer, and die at last as they have lived.

But others having reformed their outward conduct, perceive that ceasing to do wickedly is only a negative kind of religion, that there is nothing positive in it, and nothing to which they can trust for salvation. They have no peace of mind, and none of the joys of which those speak, who are the followers of Christ. They had expected, that as soon as they reformed their outward conduct, a change would come over them; that old things would pass away and all things become new. But they begin to see that the whole of their sinfulness does not consist in external obliquities, that they are guilty of numberless omissions, and that ceasing to do evil will not make them what they should be. They begin to get a glimpse of the impurity that is within. Thus ends the first stage of the sinner's conviction.

II. Let us follow him through another stage of his conviction. Instead of fleeing to Christ with a full persuasion that he cannot save himself, he resolves to perform the duties he has neglected, hoping that if he adds "learning to do well" to "ceasing to do evil," it will bring him into a state of salvation. He begins to pray and to search the Scriptures. Like Herod he does many things and hears the word gladly. He endeavors to conform to the requirements of the law. He goes to the inquiry meeting and his expectation is, that the Lord will pardon his sins and fill his soul with peace, because he is now more obedient. He imagines himself to be truly penitent, and believes the Lord will reward him by putting a new song into his mouth. Some, while in this state, are injudiciously encouraged by their friends to conclude, that they have really been converted; that if they will only think they are, all will be well. Thus without having come to Christ or even attempted to enter through the door, some conclude they have been renewed and made meet for the inheritance of the saints. The thought that they may be Christians, and that others think so, fills them with a degree of joy they never felt before. They seem to endure for a while, then relapse into their former state, and bring forth no fruit meet for repentance. Their goodness is like the morning cloud.

But some are preserved from this fatal delusion. They perceive that their hearts cannot be right. Their consciences trouble them still, for not coming up to the standard of requirement; the law denounces them for not "continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them." They become at length satisfied, that they cannot secure the gift of God, which is eternal life, by refraining from outward immoralities, nor by their efforts to keep the law perfectly. Driven from the hope of climbing up to heaven in this way, the sinner has now arrived at the end of the second stage of his efforts. Having found that by the deeds of the law he cannot be justified, let us consider,

III. How he still further tries to secure the favor of God without coming to Christ. He finds it written, "he that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy," that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins," and not considering that such promises imply a reliance upon Christ as the meritorious ground of acceptance, he confesses his sins, asks for pardon, and promises to be more watchful. He is trusting still to his own doings as much as before. The only difference between his present and former state is, that he has added to his efforts to keep the law, confessions and good resolutions. Thus many go on through life, knowing no other religion than to perform duties and pray that their omissions may be forgiven. They hope for heaven while entire strangers to Christ. The Spirit of the Lord, however, leads some of these confessors to see that hitherto they have been laboring to make clean the outside of the cup and platter, that the commandment is exceeding broad, that it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart. They discover that an external religion is insufficient, that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly," and that their hearts are full of pride, covetousness, envy, and other evil passions. They begin to see that the heart is the fountain from which their outward acts flow, and that it will avail nothing to labor to purify the stream while the fountain is corrupt. Having arrived at the end of this stage of their inquiries, let us see,

IV. In what other way the convicted sinner will seek to climb up to heaven, without entering through the door. The idea still prevails, that he can in some way work out a righteousness of his own. He does not think of relying upon the righteousness of Christ, nor does he yet feel his need of a mediator. He begins to mourn over the evils of his heart, and to confess these as he did his outward transgressions. He strives to mortify his pride, to curb his evil passions, and to banish from his mind wicked thoughts. He prays more earnestly, hears more attentively, and strives to have his heart more affected. If he seems to himself to have some success in this new effort, he begins to think he is a Jew inwardly as well as outwardly, and here he may settle down with a conviction that the work is now done. The thought that he, perhaps, is already a Christian, gives him some joy. He is in danger of mistaking a change wrought by his own efforts for regeneration by the Holy Ghost, and the joy he has in contemplating his own works for joy in the Lord.

It is not so with all. Some perceive that their hearts are still full of evil; they find no end to wrong-doing and wrong feeling. The more they consider their ways, the more evil they discover. If they succeed in mortifying one proud feeling, they perceive that they are proud of their success—their pride developes itself continually in some new form. If they cease to covet one thing, they covet another; or to envy one person, they forthwith envy another. They seem to themselves to be in the condition of one who begins to mend an old garment; the more he examines, the more rents he discovers; or like one upon ice that is giving way under his feet; he changes his position, but it breaks there also, and he can find no rest for the sole of his foot. He sees himself to be more depraved than he ever supposed himself to be; that there is no free part nor soundness in him, and that he is full of wounds and bruises. Here ends the fourth stage of the inquirer's progress. Let us consider,

V. Whether the sinner is now ready to enter through the door. He feels his need of help; he is convinced that he cannot make himself righteous. He cannot now, and thinks he never shall obey the law perfectly. The sins of his past life stand against him, and he can do nothing but confess them. He is satisfied that he needs help, but still he expects to do much towards saving himself. He has heard that Christ came to seek and save the lost, that he is a compassionate Saviour, and his help he will freely give. He goes to Christ with a desire that enough of his righteousness may be granted to make up his own deficiency. He resolves to do what he can himself, and look to Christ for the remainder. Some rest here, and live on through life expecting to be saved partly by their own doings, and partly by the grace of Christ.

Some, however, are here brought to see, that if a person seeks to be saved in part by his own deeds, he must trust to them entirely, for there can be no mixing up of his own righteousness with that of Christ. The epistle to the Galatians teaches most clearly the fallacy of the hopes of those who attempt to climb up to heaven in this way. The ways of faith and of works are so different that it is impossible to walk in both. If he pursues one he must abandon the other. The Redeemer will do nothing for those who ask him to do only in part. A garment made up of sundry sorts of righteousness is not the seamless robe of Christ's righteousness, in which all who enter heaven must be clothed. The sinner, finding that he must be saved by Christ through faith, and that there is no merit in his own doings, is brought to the end of the fifth stage of his progress. Though he has been often invited to come to Christ, to forsake all and follow him, he has never done it. He has been trying continually to climb up in some other way. But,

VI. Will the sinner now submit to the Saviour, and come under the shield of his righteousness. Some undoubtedly do, at this point, forsake all for Christ; they make no further efforts to climb up in a way of their own devising—they fall down before him and plead that he will be merciful to a sinner. But others do not even here submit themselves entirely. The pride of their hearts is not wholly subdued. Though they see they must enter through the door, or be excluded, yet they go to the Saviour with a price in their hands, or with a promise that they will be his servants, if he will receive them graciously; that they will follow him, if he will give them some assurance that their names are written in the book of Life. They are not ready to give themselves away unconditionally. Before they give up all, they wish for some assurance over and above the promises contained in the word of God, that they shall be saved. At this point, some say they have done all they can. They have no doubt done all they can to merit salvation, but they have not yet without any reserve, thrown themselves upon the mercy of Christ, with a willingness that he should do what seemeth good in his sight. The sinner must submit himself entirely to God; he must say in substance, I commit myself into thy hands; do with me as seemeth good in thy sight.

While some wish to be assured in some way, that they shall be saved, others are not willing to take the lowest seat and be accounted most unworthy. They do not wish to come as beggars for mercy. They will follow Christ, provided the paths in which he will lead them shall always be pleasant and agreeable. He who comes to the Saviour with such provisions, is brought at length to see that really he has no faith in Christ. He shrinks back from an unconditional submission; but being at length convinced of his unbelief, he reproaches himself for his unwillingness to trust himself in the hands of him, who is able to save unto the uttermost all that come to God by him. He now feels that he deserves no mercy, and that if he should be rejected, it would be perfectly just. This is usually the last stage in the sinner's course of rebellion.

What shall he now do? Behold, he says, I am vile; he sees that his heart is unholy and must be renewed, that he can give to God no ransom for his soul, that he can make no terms of his own, and despairing utterly of climbing up to heaven in a way of his own contriving, he says, "here," Lord, "I give myself away. Do unto me as seemeth good unto thee." He makes an unconditional surrender and immediately there is a great calm. The controversy is ended. His soul is serene as a summer morning. A sweet peace pervades his mind. He is willing to do any thing that is required, to be accounted the least of all saints, and to follow Christ through the whole of his earthly pilgrimage.

I will not say that every convicted sinner goes through all the stages I have named in this precise order, but very many do. Some perhaps seek to climb up in ways I have not mentioned.

It is true of every person, when he first begins to agitate the question, what he must do to be saved, that he expects to be saved chiefly by his own deeds, or on account of some merit of his own. He does not realize that he is poor and miserable, and blind and naked. He must be brought off from all reliance upon himself or others, before he will rely upon Christ and receive salvation as a free gift, as something to which he has no claim. He must be driven from every refuge, and utterly despair of entering heaven except through Christ, the door.

Let me ask those of you who have been or are now inquiring what you must do to be saved, whether you utterly despair of salvation on the ground of any merit of your own? Are you willing to be saved by the grace of the Saviour, and to ascribe all the glory of it to him? Have you come to the conclusion, that if you should be treated according to your deserts the gates of heaven will forever be barred against you? Until you despair of working out your own salvation and throw yourselves at the foot of the cross to be accepted or rejected as your Redeemer may choose, being only anxious that God may be glorified, you do not fully come to Christ. If, at any stage of your conviction, you only despair of climbing up to heaven in your own way, and look to him who is able to save all that come to God by him, you comply with the requirements of the Gospel. When you surrender yourselves to the Saviour, you will find that old things have passed away and all things have become new.

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SERMON DCXIII.

BY REV. SIMEON NORTH, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF HAMILTON COLLEGE.

DILIGENCE IN BUSINESS.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night ometh when no man can work."—John ix. 4.

In these words we find an embodiment of the conceptions of bligation entertained by Jesus Christ, relative to the true end and nission of his life upon the earth. On another occasion, he is epresented as saying, that he came not to do his own will, but he will of him that sent him. So here, when he was about to erform one of those miracles of healing, which so remarkably listinguished his ministry, he gave utterance to a similar statement. Iis language not only expresses a sense of obligation, as if e was truly alive to the necessity resting upon him; but it also espeaks his conviction, that in order fully to meet its high claims nd responsibilities, he must make use of the most diligent and ersevering effort. He had a mission to perform—a mission, oo, appropriately designated as a *work*, because it was destined o task the highest energies both of his mind and body. He arried with him ever, a consciousness of his responsibility to God, he Father, in whose service it had been undertaken; and the arnest promptings of his mind were hence, to unceasing diligence nd effort, until it should be accomplished. "I must work," says e, "the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night ometh, when no man can work."

This language embodies a true conception of the proper end nd design of human life; and we hence make use of it as giving expression and enforcement to a lesson of high and universal import. *It teaches that life should be spent in diligent effort for the fulfilment of those purposes of obligation and of duty, which* GOD *has appointed us to accomplish.*

This statement implies, *first*, that God has appointed for every man a work to accomplish in life; and, *second*, that for its accomplishment, diligent effort is necessary.

I. God has appointed for every man a work to accomplish in life.

It may be appropriately described as a *peculiar* work; because in a very important sense, it stands related to the position and capacities of each individual man. As in the bodily structure, which, during the time of our sojourning upon the earth, God has made the dwelling-place of the soul, each member has its own peculiar place and office, and accomplishes the end of its being by fulfilling the functions assigned it; so in the social organization, of which individual men are but constituent parts, each has his appointed place, with its corresponding and appropriate work. It is assigned him, not so much by the will of man, as by the Providence of God. He may be expected to attain to it, not indeed without the exercise of his own wisdom and sagacity; but still more, in humble reliance upon the wisdom of God; and by following the guidance of those providential events, which indicate the will of him, whose it is to direct the steps of his creatures.

But, as each man has his own position and work in life, and these in some sense peculiar, so his success and efficiency in that work, must depend greatly upon the aptitude of his own character and capacities, to its accomplishment. Such an aptitude may indeed be in part the gift of nature; but it must, in no small degree, be the result of cultivation; and that man evinces the highest practical wisdom, who best understands the position which God has assigned him; and who most diligently applies himself to the business of preparing to meet its demands and exigencies.

Nor do we find any exception to this truth in those cases in which the work assigned to men, is found among the allotments of common, or even humble life. Whatever may be his position, or his sphere of activity, marked out by God's Providence, every man has his work; and every such work has its individual peculiarities and features, by virtue of which, for the time being, it is made his work. This was as true of Moses when he was a shepherd in Midian, as when he was a leader and law-giver in Israel. It was as true of Jesus Christ, when he was known only as the carpenter's son, as when, in the consummation of that work, which has since become the wonder of men and of angels, he achieved the redemption of our race.

There are those, who seem to overlook this grand feature of human life. They can see, indeed, that every man's work has its peculiarity; but what is individual and special in their own work, they can recognize only in ideal pictures of coming greatness and distinction. They can find in themselves, no fitness for doing that which is at hand, and within their reach, and which God's Providence has manifestly made their work; but they are waiting until the wheels of that Providence shall have again revolved, and brought up new devolopments, and discovered new aptitudes between their own capacities and the works of greatness and magnificent enterprize which are about to be accomplished in the world. It is a most fatal mistake which such men commit: nay, it is a reckless disregard of the obligations imposed upon them by God's authority, and indicated by God's Providence. They spend life, not in doing the work assigned them; but in finding out what is the work which they are fitted to accomplish. They realize not for themselves and for others, the blessed fruits of industry. With them, life is a continued series of disappointments; and when its hours are gone, they find, in the retrospect of its wasted opportunities, that even while yet in the world, and on probationary ground, they have realized the fabled retribution of Tantalus—having been ever grasping for good, which has forever eluded their grasp.

But the work assigned to men in life, is also a *common* work. I mean, that while in a certain sense, it is peculiar, because of its relations, and adaptations to them as individuals, it has also characteristics and ends which mark it as a work appropriate to all. Among such characteristics and ends, the following may be specified as worthy of special notice.

1. It is a work arising from the character and relations of men, as intelligent, active, and moral beings. The fact that it has been imposed, implies that they stand in certain relations of dependance and obligation to God, the Creator, who has given them their capacities, and who has prescribed the manner in which they are to be employed. As creatures of intellect, they are capable of self-knowledge and self-culture: they can understand truth, perceive relations, and discover the adaptation of means to ends in the accomplishment of any work which is assigned them. As moral and active beings, they cannot only feel the claims of duty, urging them to diligence and fidelity in their Master's service; but in the way of real accomplishment, they can fulfil his purposes. They can secure for themselves the rewards of virtue and of knowledge. They can extend to others the charities of a pure and sanctified benevolence. They can practically recognize their relations to God; and thus accomplish the ends of a holy and consecrated life. No such work has been assigned to the brutes, which inhabit the fields and the mountains: nor to the countless tribes of animals which people the air and the waters. God has given them their nature; but it is not a rational and moral nature. He has assigned to them their

sphere of action; but it is not a sphere of moral duty and accountability. He has appointed to them their destiny; but not, like that of man, a destiny of illimitable progression beyond the grave. The difference between mere animal perception and moral discrimination: between reason and instinct, does not present a wider contrast than the difference between their appointed work upon the earth, and the work assigned to man.

2. The work, of which I speak, is a work of self-culture and improvement. It arises, indeed, from the character and relations of man, as an intelligent, active and moral being: and yet the capacities which make him such a being, and by which he is brought into the relations which he holds to God and to man, are capacities capable of almost indefinite expansion. In their original state they differ from what they are susceptible of becoming as marble in the quarry differs from the well-wrought and perfect statue: as colors in the crude mass differ from the forms of symmetry and beauty which glow upon the painter's canvass. The process by which the transformation is wrought, is the combined result of many influences. God works in his heart, both to will and to do, when man rises from the degradation of his fallen state, as a moral being. So, the aid and co-operation of others may help him on, in his course of intellectual improvement, and in the process by which is effected a full and perfect development of his active powers: but neither the energies of divine grace enlisted in his behalf, nor the guidance of others who have gone before him in the business of moral and mental culture, can free him from the necessity of doing work for himself. He must labour in the business of moulding his own character and shaping his own destiny. He cannot hope to be either morally or intellectually great, without being in a most important sense the architect of his own greatness. Others may show him the way; but he must run and climb for himself. Others may give him encouragement, and in his struggle with difficulties, cheer him on; but in himself and in the strength which God has given him for his work, must he find the elements of successful perseverance.

3. The work assigned to man in life, is also a work of intelligent self-control. It may be accounted one of the high prerogatives of humanity, that such control can be exercised, under the guidance of reason, and in obedience to that law which God has appointed in every mind—the law of conscience. The same energies of a free will, which give to man his powers of action, and by which he is fitted to accomplish his appointed work in the service of God, give to him also an ability to govern his own mind and heart. The steady and determined exercise of this ability, no man may surrender who hopes for progress either in knowledge or in virtue, and who accounts it worthy of his position as a man on probation, that he should be mindful of his responsibility at the bar of conscience and of God. Does he hope for progress in knowledge? Then must he know how to direct

his thoughts in the right channels, and how to apply his intellect to the proper subjects of inquiry within and around him. He must be able to arrest and hold in check the wayward tendencies of his mind to unprofitable speculation, to dreaming and fruitless reverie, as well as to a listless, and dozing, and time-killing indolence. Does he hope for progress in virtue? and would he successfully climb the narrow way which leads to glory and to happiness? Then must he watch with sleepless vigilance the seductive influence of passion within and temptation without. He must ever take care lest the mere animal tendencies of his nature gain the ascendency over the moral and the spiritual. He must see to it, that he never yield up the mastery of his own mind in subservience to those seductive influences which are wont sometimes to drag down the strongest and the best, to a fit companionship with the weakest and the worst. He who has not learned thus to govern his own mind and heart, and who has not made some progress in the formation of habits, allied to a conscientious and virtuous self-control, has not yet taken the first lesson in that kind of culture, which is worthy of a rational and immortal being. Let such a one take care how he commits his frail bark to the uncertainties of a voyage on the ocean of life. He has no preparation for a manly and successful encounter with its adverse influences of storm and tempest, of current and counter-current, of shoal and quicksand: and if he do not at length find himself a shattered wreck on the shores of eternity, it will be because he has been guided by a Hand which he has himself neither seen nor sought.

4. The work of which I speak, is a work, in the business of doing good to others. By the very constitution which God has given to man, he is made as truly a social, as an intellectual and active being. His love for others, inspired and called out, in the various relations of domestic and social life, is a feeling, as truly, and as deeply laid, in the original elements of his nature, as love for himself. The great law then of reciprocal regard—the law which requires that every man should love his neighbour as himself; and which demands that in all the relations and pursuits of life, he should evince the same sensitive regard for the happiness of others, which he is wont to cherish for his own, is a law not only consonant with reason, but one having its foundation in the deep and instinctive principles of our own common nature. No man may disregard it, and hope to prosper. No man may disregard it, and accomplish the ends of a successful and happy life. The work which man has been fitted to accomplish by the capacities of his active constitution—the work to which he is urged by the impulses of his higher and better nature—nay, the work which has been imposed upon him, and appointed as the grand business of his life upon earth, by the God who made him, is a work, the range of whose designs and bearings is as wide as the race to which he belongs. It contemplates that race, however diversified by the conditions of outward being—however distinguished by national affinities, or the peculiarities of physical

constitution, as one great brotherhood. It excludes no man from the circle of its good wishes. It regards none as beyond the range of its good endeavours. It calls after the wayward and the wandering, and invites them back to the paths of virtue and of duty. It holds out light for the ignorant, and comfort for the afflicted. It gives relief to the sick, and liberty to the oppressed, and bread to the hungry. It builds hospitals, rears churches, and opens schools of learning. It increases facilities for the diffusion of truth and the means of happiness, and for creating the elements of a higher and better civilization among the nations.

This, we say, is one of the grand features of the work appointed for man to accomplish. It is a labour of love in the business of conferring benefits upon others: and as no man can shrink from its obligation, so no one should fear to task in its accomplishment, the highest and best energies of his being.

5. But the work of which I speak, while it is undertaken and performed in obedience to the authority of God, is also one, which recognizes His glory as the end of its highest aims. This is an aspect of our subject, which transcends all that has thus far been noticed. The obligations of this work arise from the fact, that it has been appointed by God. We act as required by His authority, when we discharge the offices of a work, truly accordant with the nature and constitution which He has given us. We act as He requires, when we endeavour intelligently and conscientiously, to engage in the business of self-culture and self-control. We recognize and obey His authority when we labour for the good of others in obedience to that law, which demands that every man should love his neighbour as he loves himself.

But while we thus recognize His authority in our work, and cherish hearts of loyalty and obedience towards Him, we are also to remember, that our highest and best motive to its accomplishment, must be a desire, overruling and transcending every other feeling to promote His glory, and honour His name in our lives. HE is the source of life and light, and blessedness to the universe. It is fit that the homage of our hearts and intellects should flow back to Him, in the channels of His own wisdom and goodness, It is right that we should profoundly study His attributes, and thence gather the elements of a character, in some faint degree, assimilated to His. We may well strive to understand the principles of His government: nay, if we would know our own duty, and secure our own happiness, we must understand them, and thence derive the impulses which govern our conduct, in the work here appointed for our accomplishment. In that work we are never to lose sight of our relations to Him. In darkness, as in the light; in secret, as in public places, we are to remember that His eye is upon us, and His presence round about us: and that, as there is no spot in the universe where we can escape His *scrutiny*, so there is none where we can throw off His authority.

It is the requisition of His word, not only, that we should love Him supremely, but that *whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all for His glory.*

6. I add, in conclusion of this part of our subject, that this work is one, in which we are ever to make Christ our example and guide. It was the peculiarity of his work, that it required the feelings and sympathies of humanity, in union with the attributes of divinity: and hence in certain respects, it transcended alike the ability and the province of ordinary men. And yet, his was a common work. As a work of obedience and love, it was performed in the exercise of capacities, and in the fulfilment of obligations, which are common to every child of Adam: and hence, it may be to us and to all men, a guide and an example. Is ours a work of self-culture and improvement: So also was his: for we are told that he grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man: and that though he were a son, he learnt obedience by the things which he suffered. Is ours a work of self-control in the wise direction of the mind, and in the conscientious government of all sensual appetites and propensities? So also was his. He moved amid publicans and sinners, and yet the purity of his spirit was never sullied. His life was spent in exposure to insult and contumely, and yet, he was never angry. Forty days and nights was he exposed to the temptations of the wilderness, and yet he came forth from the ordeal, as pure gold from the furnace. Is ours a work of benevolence in the business of doing good to others? It was for such a work, that Christ assumed our nature and dwelt upon the earth—suffering in the flesh, that others might be happy—living that others might not die, and dying that others might live. Is ours, in fine, a work of obedience to God's authority, and in subservience ever to God's glory? This, too, was the end and aim of the Saviour's mission, and it is but an embodiment of the spirit which animated his whole life upon the earth, which he makes, when he says, in the words of our text, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." It is thus that Christ has gone before us, in the ways of obedience and of love: and thus, that he has left upon record, in characters of light and goodness never to be obscured, an example after which all men may aspire, and in the imitation of which, they may attain to glory and immortality at God's right hand.

II. But I pass to the second general topic of our text. For the accomplishment of the work which has now been described, diligent effort is necessary. Diligence and earnest endeavour to fulfil the duties of his mission most manifestly entered into the Saviour's conception of the work which had been assigned to him. How expressive is his language! "I must work while the day lasts: the night cometh in which no man can work." How impressively does he urge this same diligence upon others! as if it were a universal characteristic of the work appointed to men in this world. "Strive," says he, "to enter in at the strait gate: for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." How frequent too, is the recurrence of similar exhortations and sentiments in almost every part of God's word, as if the diligence and the earnest endeavour of which we speak, were fit themes for constant inculcation—to be urged upon men as line upon line, and precept upon precept. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," says the wise man, "do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." "Wherefore," says the apostle, "the rather brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." And again, "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

We are not to suppose, that a precept of such frequent inculcation, can be without important reasons, either in the necessity of the case, or in the nature of the work to be accomplished. Let me then briefly direct attention to some of these reasons.

1. I urge as first and most important, that the necessity and obligations of such effort, have been imposed by special divine appointment. It might not be without interest, here to inquire, what would have been true, had man from the beginning retained his integrity, and had he never brought upon himself, and upon the earth the curse of sin. Activity might still have been a condition of his being; but it would ever have been action from the impulses of a happy and joyous spirit, like that of the angels, who fly on exultant wing, and with jubilant voices, to do God's bidding, and who cease not day nor night, from their ascriptions of praise and glory in His name. But in the necessity of labour as now imposed, there is found a profoundly deep and painful significance. It exists as one among the penal consequences of transgression, and by its ever recurring and wasting toils, reminds us that we belong to a race of sinners. It has been appointed among the many means of moral culture and discipline, and if used as designed—if made subservient to a spirit of patience and submission, of penitence and trust—may also prove a means of salvation. And hence, as if with fallen beings like men, nothing could be accomplished without work, the direction is given by the voice of inspiration, "Work out your own salvation: for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do."

2. Diligent effort in the accomplishment of the work assigned us, is a condition to the enjoyment of a healthy and vigorous state, both of body and of mind. No truth, it is believed, has been more fully tested by experience than this. As by the constitution of his mind, and the capacities of his physical nature, man has been formed for action, and made capable of accomplishing great and important results, so the exercise of his capacities in right modes of action is found to be indispensable alike to usefulness and enjoyment. There is seen to be here, the

same harmonious agreement between the constitution of man, and the conditions of his outward being, which every where marks the works and arrangements of the Creator, and which stamps them with the impress of infinite wisdom and goodness. It is hence the ordinance of God, that if men will not work, neither shall they eat: and that if they violate this ordinance they shall pay the penalty of nature in disease of body and imbecility of mind. How impressively too, is this confirmed and made imperative by that great law of our constitution—the law of habit? —that principle by which action, and inaction are found respectively to perpetuate their influence, in ever increasing results of power and of weakness—of happiness and of misery. He, who under this law, obeys the mandate of Heaven,—working with diligence, while the day lasts, not only receives in his own experience, the legitimate fruits of labour, in growing results of strength and power, of competence and respectability, of usefulness and enjoyment; but finds at length that labour itself is sweet, and that what was at first borne, as a necessity, is at last carried, as a delight. He, too, who disregards the mandate which imposes diligence in labour, and who gives to idleness the time which should be spent in work, finds that sloth may become a habit—a habit, too, not only tormenting in itself, but with its appropriate fruits—contempt and neglect among men: shame and remorse in his own bosom; and finally, a restless and corroding consciousness that time itself has become a burden, and yet a burden that can never be thrown off.

3. Diligent effort in the work assigned us, is also a condition to the formation of the highest style of character, both intellectual and moral. This again, it is believed, is a position attested by universal experience. The basis of all that is excellent in character, is doubtless the gift of the Creator: and it is because His gifts in the native endowments of the mind, are endlessly varied, that men are fitted for whatever is individual and peculiar in the work assigned them. It is notwithstanding true, that no man can be truly great and good, or attain to the possession of a character, by which he is made an instrument fit for the accomplishment of whatever is great and good in human effort, without intense labour in the culture of the mind and heart. Without such effort, he cannot hope to fathom the depths of his own spiritual being, and attain to a knowledge of the nature and capacities of his own mind. How much less can he attain to a knowledge of the mind of God, in the understanding of those disclosures which He has made of Himself in His words and works, and by his developments of providence and grace? Without such effort, he cannot hope to attain to a complete mastery over himself, so as to hold in the steady grasp of reason and conscience, the wayward impulses of his fallen nature. How much less can he be prepared to govern other minds, and to make them willing and cheerful instruments in the accomplishment of his purposes? Without such effort, he cannot hope to understand the simplest elements of knowledge, as presented in the

form of systematic and scientific development. How much less can he expect ever to stand up side by side, with those intellectual giants of the past and the present, who have explored the centre and the circumference of human learning?

The analogies of art and of nature, are not without instructive significance in their relation to this topic. For in works of material, as of spiritual formation, it is by processes of patient and long-continued effort that those ends are attained which are wont to charm by their beauty, or startle by their greatness. It was thus that the builders of the pyramids reared their monuments in the pathway of the ages. Thus, painting, and sculpture, and architecture have been made fit vehicles for transmitting the character and the story of other times. Thus, too, in the depths of the ocean, the minute architects of the coral island, add atom to atom, and cliff to cliff, until at length their work overtops the waves with its coronal of fruits and flowers, existing ever after, as a home of commerce and a habitation for men. Such examples may be to us as living instructors. Were the pyramids reared without effort? Were the master-pieces of ancient art produced without patience? Are islands built up from the depths of the ocean without time? Time, and patience, and effort, are also the elements of intellectual and moral greatness, and he who will not use them may never hope to build for himself a character which other ages will delight to hold in remembrance.

4. Diligent effort in the work assigned us, is also a condition to the accomplishment of all high and honorable aims. There are objects embraced in the business of human life, the promotion and accomplishment of which should be to every mind matters of ceaseless endeavour. Some of these I have already brought into view, as indicating common features of the work assigned us. But there is a more specific view of this topic, which is here suggested. In those particular spheres of action, within which men individually seek their appropriate work, if it is their desire to act a truly manly part, they are accustomed to form for themselves precise and definite aims: and I may add, the more precise and definite, the more likely are they to be successful. He who enters upon life without such aims, and who hopes to accomplish its high purposes, and to solve its momentous problems, without bringing to his work steadiness and definiteness of purpose, has no conception of the true dignity of human nature. He relinquishes the just prerogatives of a rational and immortal being. We say not, indeed, that such an one will never be successful, in that low sense of success, which is measured by circumstances of pecuniary ease and profit. For men are sometimes seen to be borne on to fortune in spite of their own imbebecility and fickleness of purpose: just as straws in agitated waters —floating now in eddies, and now carried hither and thither by conflicting currents, are sometimes seen to find a quiet resting place upon the shore. I need not say that such cases are rare

exceptions. I need not tell you that men who have not learnt to form for themselves precise and definite plans for the accomplishment of high and honorable aims, and who have no purpose for which to live other than to eat, and drink, and be merry —men who are not capable of bringing up to their work the strength of an earnest and manly enthusiasm—thus giving to it the homage of their best endeavours, and their most persevering efforts—are not fit for the business and the conflicts of life. They may enter upon that business; they may gird themselves for those conflicts; they may flatter themselves and beguile others with visions of anticipated success; but unless they are made successful in defiance of their own weakness, such visions will prove but idle dreams.

5. Diligent effort in the work assigned us, is a condition to the attainment of all real and permanent enjoyment. Exemption from labour—freedom from the cares, and toils, and responsibilities of a diligent life, are, indeed, in the view of not a few, essential elements of a truly happy existence. But they, whose circumstances and inclinations allow them practically to carry out this conception, are wont to find it a most fatal mistake. For of all kinds of misery, next to the wretchedness of positive suffering, that of having nothing to do is the most painful. The mistake, too, which such men commit, is the greater, because while congratulating themselves with the idea that they are men of leisure, and above the necessity of employing their hands, or their intellects in work, are yet really engaged in a task the most toilsome and the most hopeless ever yet undertaken by man—the task of getting rid of time, without useful employment. To pass through life, without having anything good, and useful, and ennobling to do—to spend its precious hours without being animated with the hope of accomplishing something worthy of an intelligent and immortal being—to rise each successive day, while the years are pursuing their rounds, feeling that the night has been too long, and that the day will be yet longer: and saying, when the morning dawns, Oh, that it were night! and when the night comes, Oh, that it were morning!—thus to live listless, and idle, and useless, except as employment is found in feeding, and pampering the body—this, we say, is misery, compared with which the life of the galley-slave is a life of blessed enjoyment. The necessity of diligent effort in accomplishing the high purposes for which life has been given, and this as a condition to the attainment of all that is great in character, and in human enterprise, has been appointed by God himself. He knows what is our constitution, and what our destiny, and what the essential elements of enjoyment here and hereafter. He desires the happiness of his creatures more intensely than any other being. He has given proof of that desire, in the gift of His own Son to a life of toil and suffering upon the earth for the salvation of men: and yet it is His own direction, urged and reiterated in His word, that they shall themselves labour for the rewards of the blessed in heaven, by working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. He,

then, who lives without work not only disregards the appointment of God, but lives with no rational hope of happiness in this life, or in the life to come.

The subject which has occupied our attention suggests important lessons of instruction—important to all; but especially appropriate to those who are about to enter upon the duties and responsibilities of active life. Allow me then, in conclusion, to bring into view a few of these lessons.

1. It may furnish you, in the first place, with a standard by which to estimate the various pursuits in which men are accustomed to engage in life: and this, whether those pursuits assume the form of amusements, or of serious and business-like employments. We may recognize the great truth implied in our text, that work, directed ever to the accomplishment of God's will, constitutes the proper business of man in this world; and yet feel no hesitation in admitting that there are modes of relaxation which are both innocent and useful—innocent, because they violate no law; and useful, because they may serve to invigorate the body, refresh the mind, and thus prepare the whole man for engaging with a better zest in the higher employments of life. On the other hand, there are amusements of a widely different character—amusements which bring weakness and disease upon the body, which relax and unnerve the mind, and which render distasteful and odious whatever is worthy of pursuit in a truly manly and virtuous course. There are those whose only conception of enjoyment is that of access to such amusements, and with whom life itself seems but a continued holiday of pleasure, to be broken only by that satiety, and disgust with which a life of pleasure is wont to exhaust itself and defeat its own ends. So, also, there are those whose highest conception of the business of life is that of employment in pandering to the vices of others: in fanning the flames of unholy appetite; in giving unreal, but seductive charms to the multiplied forms of unlawful gratification: thus acting as allies to Satan in tempting to their own ruin those who have not the strength of purpose to turn aside from the paths of the destroyer. I need not say to you that such pleasures and such employments can have no place in the work assigned us by the Author of our being. In contact with those whose lives are devoted to such pursuits, the inculcation of inspired wisdom must be the talisman of your safety,—"Touch not, taste not, handle not." You may not tamper with their incentives to evil, and yet retain the purity of your own minds. You may not be drawn to their places of seduction, and yet retain the integrity of your own principles.

But, there are employments of a yet higher character; employments both honorable and useful in themselves, but which may yet be so pursued as not to accomplish your appointed work in life. You may love knowledge for its own sake, and pursue it with the zeal and intensity of a master-passion; but if it be without regard to its use, in subserving the cause of truth and virtue among men, you will not fill up in life the measure of your capacities and responsibilities. You may love property, and labour for its accumulation, but if it be only for the pleasure of accumulating and hoarding, you will but realize the miser's experience in life, and the miser's bitterness in death. The longing of your hearts may be for power and influence among men, and you may struggle for it in the arena of political strife, or fight for it in the conflicts of the battle field; but if you have no higher aspiration, life will only work out for you in the end results of disappointment and sorrow. It matters not, in fine, to what end your labours are directed. They may be those in which the highest achievements of earthly distinction and greatness are wont to be made; but forget not that those labours are to be pursued only in recognition of God's will, and God's authority. Nothing less than this will meet the standard of your duties and responsibilities

2. But, in the second place, our subject may show you with what habit and attitude of mind you should apply yourselves to the accomplishment of your work in life. Said the Saviour, in answer to the interrogations of his parents, when he was first entering upon his work,—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And this was the feeling which animated his life; and which he carried into every scene of labour and of suffering. This, too, prompted his words, when he said, in the significant language of our text,—"I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day." His was a habit of steady, continued application to the work assigned him His mind did not waver and fluctuate; going from object to object, and from one scheme of effort to another, without the successful accomplishment of any. Its energies were not wasted in habits of dreaming reverie, or of idle speculation, or in baseless visions of good to be accomplished under circumstances impossible in the nature of things. His conception of the work assigned him was clear and definite; and the attitude of his mind was ever that of diligent attention to its accomplishment. In this, as in all things else, let his example be your guide and pattern. Carry it with you into the fields of effort and of conflict, on which you are entering. Carry it with you in the business of self-culture and improvement, until you have become animated by his spirit, and assimilated to his character. Carry it with you in your resistance to the power of evil within and around you; and in all your efforts to do good, by subserving the cause of truth and happiness among men, let that be with you the standard of your aims, and your high incentive to diligence and fidelity in the work.

3. Remember, too, as did the Saviour, that the night cometh in which no man can work. And if, perchance, it shall be to you the closing up of a long life, ushering in at last the darkness of the grave, its coming will, notwithstanding, soon be upon you, cutting short your work, and closing up the record of your doings. Yes, the night cometh! It may come before you have dreamed

of its approach, and while, as yet, your life seems to be in its meridian, overshadowing the day with clouds, and giving monitions of an early and premature darkness. Will you not, then, be diligent while it is day? Will you not see to it that your work is done, and well done in its appointed season? The night may then come, and it shall not be to you the night of a lost eternity. The night may come, and you shall greet its coming as the purcursor of a bright and more glorious day in that world where God is the light, and where the sun of your glory and happiness shall never go down.

SERMON DCXIV.

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SPECIAL EVANGELICAL EFFORTS IN CITIES.

"Then the Master of the house being angry, said to his servants, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind."—LUKE xiv. 21.

OUR Lord's familiar illustration of the Gospel provision by the parable of a marriage feast suggests various distinct and profitable applications. As it was first intended to foretell the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, it teaches a solemn lesson respecting the goodness and severity of God: his long-suffering patience, and final wrath on them that fell, and the absolute sovereignty of his grace towards such as are brought into the fold.

It serves, likewise, very beautifully to set forth the abundance of the supply, and the unrestricted freeness of the offer. It is adapted to all; it is sufficient for all; it is offered to all. There is no individual of any class, or condition, or character, who may not participate of the gift. Again, the excuses of the invited guests show the very general disesteem in which the Gospel is held, and the kind of motives by which men are uniformly influenced in their rejection of it "*All* begin to make excuse;" and all assign plausible, but selfish, worldly reasons for their conduct.

The danger, again, of their case, who from any cause, treat the call with neglect and disdain, is strikingly exhibited. The day of their merciful visitation passes by, and they perish, notwithstanding the amplitude of the provision. "None of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper." Finally, we may gather from the parable a lesson concerning the duty resting upon those who already enjoy the Gospel, to impart it to such as are yet destitute of its light and its hopes. We are not to monopolize it, but to send it to others needing it just as much as ourselves;—to China, to enlighten the poor worshippers of dead ancestors; to India, to rescue the devotee from the wheels of Juggernaut; the babe, which a mother's mistaken zeal consigns to the waters of the Ganges;—to the follower of the false prophet; to benighted Africa; to the islands of the sea, that it may at length demolish the vast fabric of superstition and idolatry which Satan has for ages been erecting in our world, and bless the ruined race with the glad tidings of great joy. Among ourselves, too, we must take care not merely that affluence, and elegance, and learning, shall have fitting accommodations to hear the message, but that for the poor, the degraded, the sorrowful, the oppressed, ample room shall likewise be furnished. We are not to *wait* until they come to us; we are to *go to* them. We must *carry* to the negligent the word they will not seek: we must *search out* the sufferer, pining upon his bed of sickness; the lone widow; the orphan in the chambers of solitary wretchedness; the slaves of vice; the abandoned in their dens of infamy. We must breathe into the ear of that child of sorrow the sweet words of a Saviour's sympathy, and rouse the desponding heart. We must sit down beside the outcast, win his confidence by tones of kindness; tell him of "grace to help in every time of need," and so inspire courage and hope where evil habit had destroyed all self-control, and left only remorse and despair. We must point the wanderers to the gospel heavens, in which the sun of righteousness doth set his bow of promise. We must tell them how the evening of their stormy life may become serene and hopeful; how their setting sun may convert the clouds that have obscured its course into a pavilion of glory, the joyous harbinger of another and a brighter day. Moreover, we must not be easily repulsed nor discouraged on our godlike errand; but with self-denying perseverance, with the persuasion of lips upon which is the law of kindness, with the earnestness of a heart full of the love of souls and of Jesus, we must use a violence to bring them to the feast. "Go out into the streets and lanes of the city," and "compel them to come in."

But there is another train of thought very naturally suggested by the language of the text, which I intend to pursue in this discourse—viz., *the necessity and adaptation of the Gospel to cities, and the importance of making them the fields of special evangelical efforts.* Certainly the religion of the New Testament was not designed exclusively for any one place or set of circumstances, but for man as he exists at all times and in all modes of social life. This parable contains a direction to "go out into the highways and hedges" in search of guests; and so teaches that the scattered tribes of men, and even the wayfarer, are not to be overlooked. But there appears to me something significant in the fact that the Saviour not only made the compact villages and cities so often the sphere of his personal labours, but commanded his disciples to preach the Gospel, "beginning at Jerusalem;" and when persecuted in one city to flee into another; and also in the fact that the apostles, in strict observance of this injunction, almost uniformly selected populous cities as the seats of their ministrations. This was not simply to convince men that now, since the resurrection of Christ, the doctrine they had in charge was so well authenticated by evidence, that they could boldly court the greatest publicity, and challenge the strictest scrutiny;—but it was likewise because cities offered peculiar facilities for success in the mission they had been called to fulfil—to "preach the Gospel to every creature." For this reason it was that they began their aggressive warfare at points where their efforts would be *most* effective, even "where Satan's seat was."

I proceed then to some suggestions which serve to illustrate this topic.

I. The first thought that occurs to the mind in this relation is, that their very *populousness* gives to cities great interest and importance as fields for evangelical efforts. This is a consideration that appeals strongly to the sympathies and also to the convenience of the laborer. Who that has ordinary sensibility can take his station at the confluence of some of the main avenues, or on some thoroughfare of a large city, and observe the tide of human beings that rolls along from morning to night without interruption, that does not entirely cease the livelong night, and not be deeply moved by what he beholds? How much life is there, and that not merely the sensation of brutes; but how much intelligence, and emotion, and activity, and enterprise! What varieties of character and conditions! —what projects and plans!—what aspirations and disappointments!—what hopes and what despair are represented in the scene that is passing before him! He does not look upon a herd of animals, but upon thinking man. And that multitudinous way may afford him a vivid panorama of our world and of the race of man upon it: of the ever-shifting scene, the changing actors, and the joys or woes that fill up the pageantry of time. To one given to reflection, such a spectacle may excite more absorbing interest, and easily teach lessons of far higher value than all those other objects of curiosity with which a city abounds. But the Christian remembers that of that endless mass every one has an immortal soul, and is passing on to a judgment bar. The crowds he sees form too but a portion of the entire population of that city. What vast numbers besides are occupied with various in-door callings! How many are the poor, the sick, the suffering, who never appear to the public eye! and how many other currents are flowing on in other directions besides that which is immediately in view!—All these are made in the image of God—all are immortal, accountable—all are candidates for heaven or hell. As preceding generations have occupied the same places, have been engrossed by the same pursuits, and have passed away after a short and fevered career, so all these are hasting on to the dread account. What Christian revolving such thoughts in his mind, can refrain from giving vent to his feelings in the touching language of the Saviour: "I have compassion on the multitude?" Who that notices their trivial, sensual occupations, the perfect worldliness of their chosen pursuits, will not, like Paul at Athens, feel "his spirit stirred within him when he sees the city wholly given to idolatry?"—So far, then, as it is necessary to enkindle warm-hearted, Christian sympathy, the sight of the multitude is well adapted to that end. But there is another advantageous circumstance. Our object is to bring divine truth into contact with the greatest number of minds, and enforce its claims upon the conscience; to make men realize their relations to it, and its adaptation to them; its connection with their soul's peace, and its wide-reaching and ever-during consequences. In cities, large masses are collected within narrow limits: they live compactly, and are easily accessible; so that many more persons than in other circumstances can be reached in a short time, and with the same amount of well directed labour. For example: France is studded with towns and villages of various sizes: but you know Paris is France: and within the comparatively small compass of that city are collected over a million of human beings. The entire population of England, not including Scotland and Wales, is a little short of seventeen millions. The whole country is well peopled, and there are many large inland and sea-port towns: but of the entire aggregate of inhabitants, nearly two millions and a half are congregated upon the area covered by the city of London alone! Within half a century, its increase has been nearly a million and a half. And that single city contains a population equal to the entire kingdom of Denmark; half that of Sweden, and Norway, and Portugal, and Belgium, and Holland. Our own country, particularly in the Atlantic States, may be said to be thickly settled; and there are many towns of considerable magnitude. But Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, New York, are the great points of attraction. Thither the current sets from all parts and the masses are found; and that population is made up of all characters and classes, presenting the material for all kinds of benevolent labour, and all modes of address. The extremes always meet there.

We see bloated wealth and haggard want; the highest refinement and vulgar display; the palace and the hovel in the closest proximity. Specimens of piety of the most intense and devoted kind; philanthrophy self-sacrificing and unwearied, inventing and enterprising to devise and execute plans of benevolence, and to bear succour to the needy; the highest forms of humanity, the most beautiful illustrations of the pure spirit and effective activity of Christ's Gospel are there; and there, too, heartless selfishness and hoarding avarice abound; and there the very worst characters herd, to contrive, and practice their villany, and man reaches the lowest point of personal and social degradation.—The spacious avenues are lined with store-houses, in which are gathered the rare and costly products of every clime; and commercial success furnishes to all classes the means of gratifying pride and luxury, the invariable attendants upon increasing riches. Splendid equipages glitter before the eye, and crowds of the fashionable and the gay expand their lustrous wings in the sun-beams of folly. The show proceeds until the sight is pained, and the imagination itself is bewildered with the varied and the gorgeous display. But hard by, what a different scene presents itself! Narrow, filthy lanes and ruined hovels literally swarm with life. The neglected outcasts of every color, and lineage, and tongue, hide themselves from the public gaze in remote corners up close alleys, in garrets and cellars; and the profligate find a congenial retreat and are at home. Misery, indeed, dwells there; but there also vice and crime hold their orgies, and moral corruption festers in its own rankness and becomes gangrened, and spreads its poison through the atmosphere around.

In another direction, again, are found objects that awaken a different interest—Christ's poor to be ministered to. I could recently have taken you to a remote spot, where, after mounting a trembling stairway, in a confined garret lay a father, passing away, in the prime of his years, the victim of consumption. His daily labour had been the soul dependence of an affectionate wife, and bright promising children. That provision was now at an end, and, strangers in a strange land, their entire support was from the precarious charity of those who might casually become acquainted with their destitution. It was a hard lot, for they had been accustomed to better things. For her and for her children, the prospect was dark indeed. But there was no murmur there. They had professed to be the Saviour's followers, and now was the time to trust him while he led them through a dreary way. They knew that God was a refuge, and a very present help in trouble, and to him they fled. The promise of covenant care, the doctrines of Bible truth, and the voice of prayer, inspired resignation and hope. The dying man could leave his loved ones to Him who is "a Father of the fatherless, and the widow's God," and depart in hope. And they remain Christ's legacy to his people on earth. But many instances of equal sadness exist among us—nor need you search far to find them out. Any Pastor, any Tract Missionary, or visitor of the Society for the Relief of the Poor, can tell you of such cases not a few. How true is it that "one-half of the world does not know how the other half lives," nor the superior mercies of their own lot! Hence, to ourselves as much as to them, the value of personal intercourse with the poor and forsaken. And remember that "to *visit* the fatherless and widow in their affliction," is one test of Christian character. That piety that luxuriates in religious sentimentalism, that does not evince and corroborate its life by beneficent action, certainly is not healthful in its tone—is not half so beautiful to man, nor so acceptable to God as that which blends the incense of daily prayer with the visits of mercy and the oblations of unostentatious charity.

Now, all these classes are found mainly in our cities. City populations are made up of just such varieties. Here is the material for our work. Here is the field ripe for the harvest, and Christians are called to enter it. These multitudes, so diverse in many respects, are in others upon a level. They have souls of incalculable worth; they have all gone out of the way of life; Christ came to seek and to save the lost; and these lost ones we must strive, with his blessing, to save, by bringing to them the knowledge of the truth. They are compact; at our doors. Many can be easily approached; for Providence has prepared the way by disappointments and sorrow. But if they neglect or repel all ordinary means of grace, still must we not abandon the work; for interests too momentous to them, society, their posterity, and the kingdom of Christ, are depending upon our labours.

II. I remark, again, that the EXCITABILITY of a city population, their curiosity, their Athenian love of novelty, although, in some points of view, indeed, disadvantageous, may yet in others be favorable to our purpose, if we are wise to adapt ourselves, and our instrumentality to meet the case. And this, I am persuaded, we can do, without derogating from the proprieties of the religious character, or losing sight of the dignity of the divine message. Now, the regular ministrations of the word and ordinances by settled pastors in organized churches, I feel to be so essential to the growth and perpetuity of Christ's kingdom, that no other ordinance or mode of operation can supply their place. These are the bulwark and defence of Christianity. In them is nurtured the spirit, and there are found the resources that support all your benevolent operations. Out of them, and from the teachings of the stated ministry, come the means and the men that make this age conspicuous beyond all others for evangelical enterprise. And any comparison between this and any other mode of religious action, to the disparagement of a thoroughly educated and settled ministry, is exceedingly unwise—for it overlooks the very source of our power—and unscriptural, for it dishonors the Saviour's special appointment for lasting good in the world. But then, there is no doubt in my mind that, in subordination to this, there is room for other modes of effort and address, and that the condition of our country, and especially of our cities, calls for their use. We are apt to connect with the missionary-work, the idea of a far-off field, destitute of all means of grace; a community where no Sabbath dawns; where there are no Bibles; and where no voice of the living preacher breaks upon the stillness of spiritual death with the tidings of salvation. Yet, in Christian lands, there are hundreds of thousands just as destitute. They live in the heart of Christian communities, and therefore experience a sort of reflex influence upon their sentiments and conduct, from the prevalence of Christian institutions around them. But as to any personal concern in the matter, they have no abiding religious convictions, and are as literally "without God in the World," as if they were buried in the depths of Gentilism. They will not voluntary seek our churches, for all their tastes and habits are averse from divine ordinances, and unless some means be devised to get hold of them, to engage their attention and excite their interest, this indifference will grow and ripen and bear deadly fruits of impiety. Yet, they are acute and inquisitive; fond of excitement; and, as often appears, their feelings may be easily enlisted on subjects of religious concern. If, then, we can take advantage of this propensity—if, by means somewhat peculiar, yet consistent with Christian sobriety, we may bring them within the reach of good influences, and by degrees allure them to the house of God and to religious associations—it is our evident duty to make the effort. The Methodists, in their early rise, did this kind of work in Great Britian, and with wonderful effect. They seemed to be raised up by Providence, for the special service of arousing a torpid church to sensation and life, when vital religion was at a point of most lamentable depression. And whatever we might object to the system of Wesley and his coadjutors, as a permanent mode of operation in an already regulated church, yet the impulse of a single will upon zealous subordinates, adapted it admirably for aggressive warfare upon the ignorant and vicious masses. And they have been successful pioneers in our new settlements, and have fulfilled a noble mission in all lands. Yet Wesley, Whitefield, and their associates, committed themselves to a novel course, which probably an urgent cause could alone justify. In their case it surely did. By field preaching and by breaking through the fetters of a dead formality in other ways, they revived apostolic scenes, and wrought signal triumphs—God working with them as in times of primitive Christianity. If I am asked whether I would commend out-door preaching among ourselves, I reply, that I could neither advise nor, if soberly done, condemn it. It is work that requires peculiar qualifications, and moreover, such an inward conviction of personal duty, and such a hallowed consecration of mind and heart, as can brook no ordinary restraints, and is ready to endure all things from love to the Saviour, and the souls of men. It needs a very special call; and, in its nature, I think, must be temporary, since its success will much depend upon its novelty, appealing as it does to the curiosity of the popular mind. The exigencies of the lower classes, and of the immigrant class, may demand some such expedient. And so long as the truth in Jesus is taught, his institutions are honored and good is done, I am not disposed too rigidly to object to the ways of others because they follow not with us.

But other means, since Wesley's day, have been brought into operation, adapted, in a good measure, to meet these wants. Our Bible and Tract, and Sabbath School Societies; the city missionary and the colporteur; missionary-preaching in tents or in the large rooms of public buildings, suit the case; and, by such agencies, incalculable good has already been done. Why do Popery, infidelity, the various forms of delusion and impiety, so loudly rail at the ministry, at these societies, and such efforts, if it be not that they have had a taste of their success. What means of these kinds we have, then, let us ply with all the skill of adaptation and decision of purpose they will possibly allow. And, I think, we shall then find no great difficulty in keeping alive the curiosity and interest of the popular mind.

III. Again; our general subject may be illustrated by the fact that LARGE CITIES ARE CENTRES OF POWER AND SOURCES OF INFLUENCE over surrounding regions; indeed over the whole country. Here wealth accumulates, which, proverbially, is power. Here fashion holds its court and enacts its decrees, which are submissively obeyed, to the cut of a coat, the style of a bonnet, the dressing of the hair, by the beaux and the belles of every village in the land. From Paris, London, Washington, from every capital, goes forth the legislation that controls the entire people, and, in many cases, even those on the other side of the globe. At the Bourse, at the Exchange in London, in Wall-street, are conducted the money transactions of the world.

The prices of stocks, the value of railroads, your banking operations, are all settled at the broker's board. And in cities the means are sought by which all those enterprizes are carried on that keep capital in circulation and provide various employment for the labouring classes. A large commercial metropolis is the great heart of the country, that beats in unison with the pulsations of every part, and sends the life-blood through every vein and artery from the centre to the extremities of the body politic. Of course, all who have fortunes to make or to spend, naturally seek the cities. Here collect the young men—the ardent, the enterprising—from every quarter; those of the finest talents and best habits, and those without morals or principle; and the grand object is to acquire wealth. With many, their motto is, "Get money: get it honestly if you can: but get money." Here, too, it is spent profusely, for pleasure or sensuality; but with equal munificence at the call of philanthrophy, ungrudgingly and with wide diffusion. To show the influence of this city in this view, we may simply observe, that there is hardly a college, or seminary, or new village church erected, that does not seek help from the city. And usually they meet a courteous reception and substantial aid. The amounts annually bestowed in benevolence would surprise those who have never looked into the matter. Nor is there, as I believe, a more liberal set of men in the world than the business men of New-York.

Now all these things give importance and influence to the city. Hundreds of thousands resort to it for trade or amusement, and form a floating population far exceeding the stated numbers of many large towns. Being free from observation and the restraints of home, they are tempted to plunge into the gaieties and vices of the town. When these persons return to their homes or when the young clerk revisits his native village, they will seek to enhance their importance in the eyes of their old companions, by a parade of city style or manners, to the overthrow of those chaste and simple virtues their fathers practised. Or, what is worse, the corruption with which they have become infected, cleaves to them and introduces a moral pestilence into the place. Many of our beautiful rural retreats have thus lost the decent character and the modest charms they once possessed, through the encroachment of city habits.

Again; the literature of the city is the staple reading of the whole land. Here it is produced. And the penny sheet, or formidable journal; the magazine, the novel, all descriptions, good and bad, to suit all tastes, and at all prices, immediately find their way to the steamboats, rail-cars, hotels, and are hawked and purchased and read from Maine to Georgia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It cannot be but that a decisive influence must follow. And when we consider what is the character of much of this product, how the vilest sentiments are insinuated or openly taught, what floods of sensuality have proceeded from some of our largest printing establishments, in the form of newspapers, or novels, or even the philosophical treatise, we see that that influence must be disastrous in the extreme. It is as if a destroying angel were flying through the land, breathing pestilence among its inhabitants, and touching with blight and mildew the fields rich with promise of future abundance. And when the thoughtlessness which even good men have displayed in this matter, is remarked, one is almost tempted to wish the freedom of the press restricted, that the nuisance might be abated.

It is true there is a counterpart to all this. The influence of the religious character of the city is vast and equally diffusive. It has need to be so, to hold in check the forces of Satan, and keep alive the tone of piety in the midst of so much ungodliness. Your churches, and preachers, and Sabbath-school, and Bible and Tract operations, the Young Men's Associations, Temperance Societies, and other good agencies, are well known, and become the models of similar institutions elsewhere; they supply, and their missionaries and colporteurs spread broadcast the religious literature which is to counteract the destructive effects of infidel and sensual publications, and to feed the masses everywhere with knowledge and understanding. The hopes of Christians turn to these agencies to fulfill this service. And when they at the farthest extremity of the country, consider how absolutely their own interests, as well as those of other lands are blended with the success of these societies, they surely will feel the obligation more pressing, to minister means and to encourage them by their prayers. Were our Bible and Tract Houses to sink, and carry down with them the agencies they represent, and they could not be restored, I sincerely think the calamity of the country and the world would be more deplorable, than if the millions of material wealth collected in this city were consumed. The one could be borne and recovered; the other would remove that which makes a people truly prosperous, by making them virtuous, and gives a better hope to erring man.

IV. I remark once more, that the TEMPTATIONS in large cities render evangelical efforts peculiarly necessary to guard and save the unwary. I know that temptations exist everywhere, and the depraved heart is easily inflamed. But nowhere can vice assume so bold and flaunting an air—nowhere do facilities for sinful indulgence so much abound—nowhere does the tempter spread his wiles so insidiously to beguile the heedless—and nowhere can every taste find such ready gratification, with the promise of such entire secrecy, as in a large city. First, the whole arrangement of city life is fraught with danger to the moral and religious principles of even such as are most scrupulously watchful. It is a scene of worldly parade, and competition, and indulgence. All classes strive after it, or are gradually drawn into it. And as it is seen that elegant personal decoration, gorgeous furniture, equipage, state, luxurious living, require money, and that "money answereth all things," the temptation with many, to esteem its acquisition the great object of life, becomes almost irresistible. Hence the complete absorption of the mind in business; the danger of lowering the standard of piety; of forgetting the soul in the adornment of the body, its heavenly mansion in the grandeur of its earthly habitation. Hence, too, the temptation to forfeit trusts, and seize dishonest gains; to make haste to be rich by speculations and fraud.—Our hotel palaces also are making sad inroads upon our habits, by inducing families to break up their separate establishments, and live in splendour, free from domestic care. And if domestic virtue do not suffer it will be wonderful. Think what must be the magnitude of these establishments, and what the throng to this city, and what the influence upon city and country, when the profits of one for a single year are said to exceed one hundred and twenty thousand dollars! But the amusements of a city are likewise sources of evil. Scores, from the low show shop to the magnificent museum, or theatre, may be found, where men, women, and children may be suited with low buffoonery, or *moral plays*, according to their taste or consciences, at all hours of the day, almost of the night. Hundreds of such receptacles are said to be open on the Sabbath, chiefly for the foreign population, where music and dancing violate the sanctity of the day, and perpetuate foreign vices among us. Hard by abound places, licensed and unlicensed, for the sale of intoxicating liquors, from the meanest groggery to the elegant saloon, where seduction sits at the door, and saith: "Come eat of my dainties, and drink of the wine that I have mingled!" And multitudes are tempted to enter, not knowing that those "ways are the ways of hell, going down to the chambers of death." The exposure of all classes, but especially of the young, of transient strangers, and of young men who come from the country to obtain positions in business, and are free from the restraints of home, is, beyond computation, dreadful. The lack of society, or love of amusement, may be so strong as to override conscience; or they may vainly imagine that their virtue will be armour-proof against temptation when it comes. And they often hasten, "as a bird to the snare, not knowing it is for its life." No places can be found in small towns or villages so low, and none so grand as thousands where the flames of hell are enkindled; and no objects of guilt and ruin either so splendid or so forlorn and hopeless as those that are common in large cities. I could narrate thrilling stories of some within my own knowledge, both high and low, from country and city, whose early promise has been most woefully blighted; whose fervid course of trangression, and sad and ever-tragic ends could be traced to their ambition to figure among the rich and fashionable, or to the temptation presented by our theatres and their accompaniments: the drinking saloon, the gambling hell, vicious companions, and guilty indulgences. It requires no imagination to devise such characters, or dress out such scenes: they are, alas! too natural and too common. The reality will often be far more startling than vivid picture—fact than fiction. And when we reflect what numbers of all classes and characters collect in cities; how assiduous the tempter is how wretchedness may seek relief or excuse in its absolute misery for indulgence, we need not enlarge on the dangers of city temptations.

But can any lover of his kind, can a Christian reflect upon these things and not ask, is there no remedy? Can he feel that cities are not on all accounts fields demanding special religious efforts? If a man of wealth, can he fail to inquire whether a portion of that wealth, acquired in the city, should not be liberally devoted to the interests of the city? Whether his poor neighbour does not want food he can supply? Whether there is not some helpless orphan he can raise to hope and usefulness? Some widow to whom he can extend the means of preserving herself and her children from despair? Can he not inquire if his efforts may not procure the blessing of education to some youth who has talents; and only wishes the opportunity to be allowed to use them? Whether there be not some worthy young man just struggling into buisness to whom he might stretch out a helping hand? Whether in these or other ways he may not preserve his gold from the canker that consumes hoarded riches, and bless himself by becoming a blessing to others. Again, since the bestowment of temporal gifts is not the only mode of beneficence, nor this world the whole of man's existence, let such an one ask, if there be not some objects of religious benefaction that legitimately claim his regard. Can you not send a Bible to a destitute family? Can you not induce your neighbours to send their children to the Sabbath School, or themselves to attend the sanctuary? Can you not aid the erection of some feeble church or of missionary houses for the destitute? There is a large class among us, our foreign population, who require this aid, or they will settle and spread among us without any religious principles, and be little fitted to become good citizens, or to hand down to others our institutions which have been planted, and can only be perpetuated by the influence of

Protestant piety. But why should I multiply such inquiries? The citizens of New York have always shown a most commendable spirit on these subjects; and after the recent example of bequests to the amount of tens, twenties, hundreds of thousands for religious uses, I do not fear that they are growing weary in well doing.

The City Tract Society fills one very essential department of labour, and co-operates in various ways with other associations which look to the temporal or spiritual wants of the dependent classes in our city. This society was organized in 1827, and occupies itself in the dispersion of tracts; and more especially by missionary instruction and personal address seeks to reach the destitute and bring them under the influence of regular religious ordinances. In 1852 it employed 26 missionaries, and 1,176 visitors, and the results of its labors in various ways were highly satisfactory. When you consider what an immense number of immigrants are landed in our streets (300,000 annually), how many foreigners make this their permanent abode, and how many tarry for a short time on their way to our Western States; and when you reflect who these immigrants are, how much they need religious instructions and how certainly they will not get it by their own exertions, nor in any way except it be by some such organization, you will confess that this society has an important work to do. There is a class our regular means of grace cannot reach. They are thrown upon us by Providence from all countries of Europe, and with all kinds of religious notions; they are to make part of this great republic and greatly to influence its destinies; but still more important, they are immortal beings hastening to eternity, and they depend on us for the light that is to guide and the hope that is to save them! The appeal in their destitution is at once to the patriot and the Christian to send them help from the sanctuary and strengthen them out of Zion. But besides these the seamen and boatmen of this commercial metropolis, the inmates of our humane and criminal institutions, and the outskirts of the city come under the supervision of this society. Now no one acquainted with New York can survey the field and not see the vast importance of just such an instrumentality to meet cases that must be met in this way or not at all. You could not, perhaps would not, do this service. Then aid and encourage such as can and will. This subject of provision for the religious wants of the destitute among us is forcing itself more and more earnestly upon the attention of our churches. And well it may when we observe what is going on. What luxury to draw away the rich from regard to religion, and what poverty and vice to deter masses from seeking divine ordinances; and then this constant tide of immigration, which obviously is giving to our city a new and foreign aspect. The result we must regard with solicitude. Yet I do not believe that either our religion or our republic is to go down in the torrent. I believe that God has prepared this people by a peculiar course of discipline for this crisis and now send them over to us that we may bless them with religious light and civil freedom—and then they will send back to the Old World the influence that shall show their work and prepare the people of the Old World to assert and enjoy the same blessings. But however that may be, our mission is not merely to possess and enjoy, but to impart and to bless. And if we be faithful we may stand pre-eminent among the nations, and be honoured to grace his coronation when Jesus shall come to assume the crown and the sceptre of the millennial kingdom.

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SERMON DCXV.

BY REV. OWEN STREET.

ANSONIA, CT.*

ANSONIA—REMEMBRANCE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."—Psalm cxii. 6.

Everlasting Remembrance! Nothing else that is so enduring can man leave behind him. His body can only be said to outlast his breath; his monuments are consumed by the elements, or eaten away by the tooth of time, and his institutions go to decay with the advance of society; but the memory of distinguished goodness is enduring. The portrait given in this psalm is as admirable in one age as in another; it loses nothing by time, or the changes that overturn the customs and usages of the world. "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord—that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon earth; wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth forever. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness; he is gracious and full of compassion and righteous. A good man showeth favor and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved forever; the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; he hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth forever. His horn shall be exalted with honor."

Here are the leading features of a type of character that is fitted to make a valuable and permanent impression on the world. It seems to have been sketched from life. Every generation produces such men, and is modified by them, and retains their impress when they are gone. First of all is the fear of God, an element that binds to universal rectitude, and pervades and gives solidity to the entire character. This is accompanied with kindness to man, showing itself in daily favors, in lending for the accommodation of others, and in giving to the poor. Next comes the element of sound judgment or discretion which discovers itself in the general ordering of his affairs, and keeps him back from disastrous mistakes. Then we notice a certain fearlessness of evil tidings, or of intimations of evil, or of plots on the part of the designing. And finally, as near akin to this, that decision of character which is denoted by the expression, "his heart is fixed."

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* On occasion of the death of Anson G. Phelps, Esq., of New York.

It is not strange that in the shading off of such a portrait, we should find "light arising out of darkness," or a ready recovery from reverses—great and immovable prosperity, and wealth, power and distinction, such as are expressed by "riches in his house"—coffers ever full—and "his horn exalted with honor." Such a man will make his influence felt in any sphere, and will be remembered when he is gone. There is an obvious tendency to this in the nature of things, and it is rendered sure by the ordination of Heaven. And there is a value in such remembrances to those who inherit them. They are a stimulus to every noble aspiration, and a check upon every tendency to degeneracy. Childhood gathers from them lessons of wisdom, and germs of enterprise and virtue. Youth is inspired with manly sentiments, and strengthened to resist temptation. The public mind is formed, moulded and impelled by influences emanating from the monuments and remembrances of departed worth. New England would not be what it is, without the memories of Plymouth and Bunker Hill. Had our nation no such history as that of '76, and no such names on the scroll of the past as those of Washington, and Henry, and Franklin, and Adams, its subsequent career had been widely different, and its prospects quite other than they are. Better blot out our capital, than change our history.

Thus too it is with smaller communities, who have an early history that is redolent of virtue. And thus it is even with a remote kindred, who can point to a distinguished and worthy ancestry. And it is worse than a sacrilegious neglect with either, to suffer such memories to go to decay. They lose with them a portion of healthful energy—an element of vitality, that is potent to resist corruption and moral disease. This place bears the name and many an impress of the intellect and heart of one, who is now gone from this world. It is fit that we should improve the occasion to gather up such remembrances and lessons from the past, and especially from his history, as may have a value for us.*

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* As giving a sketch of the life and death of a most distinguished and devoted Christian merchant, this discourse can scarcely fail to interest and profit the general

This village is young, but it will not always be young; and facts that are now within our reach, if suffered to escape us, may be irrecoverably lost, and every salutary influence they might have exerted upon the generations to come, forfeited and thrown forever away.

The first thing which we have to record, then, as appropriate to this crisis, is the fact that our village does not bear the name that has been given it, without good and sufficient reason. It is not a mere thing of taste, or accident. It is a thing of nature and of right: a legitimate inheritance: the name of the father descending to the child. ANSON G. PHELPS was, in the largest sense, the father of this village. It owes its whole existence to him. It was his enterprise, his capital, his determined perseverance, that erected this into a business centre, and presented the attractions that have drawn this busy population together. But for him, it had remained a mere agricultural district, of no unusual importance, and no peculiar promise. And yet the circumstances that led to this result were not all of his arranging. There is too obvious a trace of a higher Providence, to be overlooked.

The first outlay of enterprise on the part of Mr. Phelps, in this valley, was at Birmingham, in the year 1834–5. His efforts were attended with such encouraging success, and the place enlarged with such rapidity and thrift, that all his thoughts, as regards this region, centred there. Some four or five years after he made this beginning at Birmingham, he began to turn his thoughts toward a larger improvement of the water of the Naugatuck, for the benefit of that village. But nothing was actually undertaken until about ten years afterward. This brings us down to the year 1844. Previously to this time, he had contemplated building a dam about a mile and a half below the present dam, and all his purchases of land had been made with that view. But he had been withheld from carrying this project into effect by the fact that he could not obtain the control of all the land that he would be obliged to overflow. At this time the present dam was completed; but its owners contemplated nothing further than a canal of moderate length, on the west side of the stream, giving them a fall of some fourteen feet. Mr. Phelps, laboring still under the same difficulty in regard to the low lands, which would be overflowed if he built the dam he had been so long contemplating, now conceived the gigantic scheme of substituting the dam already built, and continuing the canal on to Birmingham; thus securing the advantage of a large increase of power from the amount of water at command, and concentrating all the business it would create at that village.

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reader. Even its local bearing will enhance its public utility by exciting livelier feeling, and thus rendering more deeply impressive the sentiments so lucidly and happily presented by its author—sentiments of such vital importance to every village and people.—ED.

Had either of these plans prevailed, the village which we now inhabit would never have been built, and these churches and schools would have had no existence. But God had use for them, and other counsels must prevail. Mr. Phelps bought the dam in 1844, with the land necessarily appertaining to it, for twenty-four thousand dollars. He then attempted to purchase the land which he would need to occupy in carrying out his project. In these negotiations he was disappointed. Prices became suddenly inflated, and he judged it impolitic to proceed. But he was not the man to give up, and conclude that because a thing could not be done in one way, it could not be done at all. The river had two sides; and if he could not bring the water down on the one, what should hinder his trying the other? So he seems to have reasoned, and in a little time these heavy excavations and embankments were begun. In 1845 he commenced building a factory,* and a few dwelling houses, for which that would soon create a demand. From this, he went on building, and furnishing inducements for others to build, until the village has assumed its present size and importance.

But to furnish a water-power, lay out a village, and erect buildings, is not, as a matter of course, to lay a foundation for subsequent enterprise and prosperity. We have seen villages that are going to decay, and apparently soon to be deserted. This village would have been deserted, at its very beginning, had a species of manufacturing been commenced here, for which there was little demand; or had agents been employed who had no capacity to influence trade, or secure a market for our products. And even with all this, it were better that it had been deserted, if no adequate provision were made for the moral and educational wants of its inhabitants; if it were to be filled with a population of bodies rather than souls—a village of mere human animals, without intellectual or moral culture, disowning the Sabbath, and the God in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Of all this its founder was aware; hence his ready patronage of whatever looks towards the moral and religious welfare of the community. And yet he seems never to have forgotten that the best way to aid a community in regard to these higher interests, is to induce them to aid themselves. To build houses of worship for them, and endow their ecclesiastical societies with ample funds to meet all current expenses, would be to confer a very doubtful blessing. The true way is to aid them while they need it, just enough to encourage them to put forth their own strength for the founding and support of these institutions. Then they will prize them. Then they will feel that the guardianship of these institutions rests with them, and they will be disposed to take care of them.

This has been the course actually pursued by our departed friend. Indeed, such was his discernment of human nature, that he saw the wisdom of this policy in regard to other than religious and public interests, and adopted it largely in his commercial transactions. If, in effecting a transfer, he made a purchase of real estate, which he could not oversee, he did not choose to assume the whole ownership himself, but he shared it with others, whose interest in it would lead them to preserve it from decay, and render it productive. Under this policy he has seen his worldly enterprises prosper; and he has lived long enough to see its wisdom proved in its application to the more important interests of religion. This community had churches organized among them as soon, and in as rapid succession, as they were needed; and the worship of God was celebrated here in the very infancy of the place. And our institutions are now, to all appearance, planted on as substantial a foundation, and give as fair promise of answering well their end, as those of any similar community in the region. It is sufficient to say, in this connection, as illustrating the care of Mr. Phelps for the interests of religion among us, that he made a donation to this Society of the building spot on which this house is erected, and of the sum of one thousand dollars to aid in its construction. In addition to this, he has pledged, for a term of years, an annual donation, to aid in defraying the current expenses of this society.

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* The Copper-Mill.

Since his enterprise began to expend itself in this town, it has more than quadrupled its population, and the property within the same territorial limits has tripled since 1845. Hundreds of families are supported in this town by factories whose existence is to be traced to his enterprise; and not a few are to be found, who began in his employ, less than ten years ago, penniless, but have now comfortable homes, and can count their thousands.

Such is a brief survey of the claims which the barest justice to ourselves presents, for some improvement of the late dispensation of Providence, in removing from the ranks of the living, the founder and patron of this place. The village owes its very existence, and all its prosperity, under God, to him: it bears his name: and his whole policy in regard to it, has made him worthy of our veneration.

Let us inquire, then, in the light of his own personal history, what associations, and what lessons of practical wisdom, the name ANSONIA should suggest.

In the statements that I may make, there will not, probably, be much that you have not already learned from the newspapers, or from other sources; it is not my office, on this occasion, so much to give you facts which you do not know, as to lead you to some improvement of those which you do know. The order which I propose to adopt, is, first, to submit a brief sketch of his life, and, secondly, to develope the more prominent traits of his character; pointing out, incidentally, their connection with his great achievements and his worth.

1. Anson G. Phelps was born in March, of the year 1781. His birth-place and his early home was in Simsbury, in this State. In early infancy he was bereft of his father, and at the tender age of eleven, of his mother. But in those early years, the forming hand of the mother had well done its work. Her eminently Christian spirit, her godly example, and her pious counsels, had breathed over his childhood an influence that was lasting as life. Hers was not an austere, ungenial, and repulsive type of religion; but such as became a Christian mother. Hence he loved to be with her, and neglected the sports of other children, that he might render her such assistance as he could, and more than all, that he might enjoy her society. Besides promoting other and higher ends, this, doubtless, gave a practical turn to his thoughts in early life, and inspired him with a disrelish for trifles, and a taste for that which is substantial, and useful and enduring.* When he became an orphan, by the death of his mother, he made his home with the minister of the parish, the Rev. Mr. Utley, with whom he remained a number of years. While living with him, he learned the saddler's trade of an older brother, and prepared to try the rough ways of life alone. He always looked back on this portion of his life with much satisfaction, and retained for "good Father Utley," as he called him, great veneration and affection. And this was well repaid, with corresponding sentiments of regard. The good man treated him ever as a son, and retained his interest in him as long as he lived. At about the age of 18, in connection with a powerful revival of religion, under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Hallock, his mind became deeply penetrated and moved with a sense of divine things, and he was led to devote himself heartily to the interests of religion, and the service of God.

When his minority was past, he was led by a desire for enlarged enterprise to remove to Hartford, where he became an active member of the church under the care of Dr. Strong. In this city he married Miss Olivia Eggleston, the companion of his subsequent life. For several years, while carrying on in partnership with Mr. Cramton the trade which he learned in his youth, he passed his summers at the North, and his winters at the South; devoting the one more especially to manufacturing, and the other to the sale of his wares. After a time he sold out his interest in the business to his partner, and embarked in an exclusively mercantile traffic.

As his operations became extended, it was manifest that New-York afforded the best facilities for carrying them on, and he removed in 1815 to that city. Here he became a member, and a most active and efficient officer of Dr. Spring's church. His membership was afterwards transferred to the Mercer Street church, (of which he was one of the founders,) and in which he remained until his death. In business he became associated with Elisha Peck, at the corner of Cliff and Fulton streets. They expended large amounts in manufacturing interests in Haverstraw, and built at their own expense the greater part of the village known by the name of Sampsonville. Here he narrowly escaped death by the explosion of a steamboat at Grassy Point. He was on his way to the landing to take passage in this boat, when he was dissuaded by the captain of a schooner, who invited him to take passage with him, and assured him that he would reach New-York within half an hour of the time of the boat. Scarcely one who entered the ill-fated boat at that point escaped.

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* Mr. Phelps has testified his own deep sense of his indebtedness to this early maternal influence, by erecting, in the latter portion of his life, a handsome monument over the grave of his mother.

In 1832 occurred another accident, which, but for a similar Providence, had involved him in equal peril of life. His store at the corner of Cliff and Fulton streets had been too heavily packed in its upper stories for the strength of the building, and fell in the middle of the day with a terrific crash, killing nine persons who were employed in it. The Bible Society was to have held its meeting at his store at that very hour. But in consequence of some intervening circumstance, the meeting was held at another place, and Mr. Phelps was absent from his store to attend it. One more change in his business relations, placed him at the head of the firm so long and widely known as that of Phelps, Dodge & Co., in which he became associated with his son, and sons-in-law.

Of the constant and always safe enlargement of his business, and his wonderful success, I need only say—it all evinces a degree of forecast, sagacity and enterprise that is rarely to be found so happily blended in one man, and when thus blended constitutes the highest order of talent. Mr. Phelps was not a common man—a man elevated by the merest accident or caprice of fortune to a position of wealth and influence. He made his way up to that position, under the favoring Providence of heaven, by the force of his own well directed efforts.

2. To this brief synopsis of the events of his life, some incidents will be added, in the illustration which I am to attempt of his character. It may not be premature for me to say at this stage of the discourse, that I regard Mr. Phelps as an eminent example of the type of character commended in the psalm with which this discourse was introduced. He was a "man who feared the Lord." Early in life he devoted himself to the service of God, and never swerved from that consecrated vow. A long life has he spent in that whirl of worldly excitement that "drowns so many in destruction and perdition;" but he kept wide of the vortex, and out-rode the danger—maintaining his integrity to the last. "He remembered his Creator in the days of his youth," and when the days of trial came—those days that make others worldly and extravagant and vain—his God remembered him.

The fear of God was a pervading element of his character. It modified his aims—it fortified his principles—it spiritualized his affections. It was a permanent principle; it passed on with him from place to place, and from stage to stage of life. When he removed to Hartford, he did not forget his church membership, and leave his religion behind. He was faithful to the domestic altar and to the prayer-meeting. At the one, he gathered all his servants, male and female, and each read the scriptures in turn, and to the other he was fond of taking his children, and as many of his family as could go.

When he removed to New-York, it was not simply the merchant, it was the Christian, still true to his conscience and his God, that removed. His religion was of a quiet, but it was not of an inactive type. Dr. Spring was not the man to attract an indolent, lukewarm professor of religion to his church. There was an atmosphere of high and heavenly piety there. And it was this consideration, doubtless, that determined Mr. Phelps in the choice of his church. And he soon found, that he himself was not to remain idle for want of something to do. He found himself often in the atmosphere of a revival of religion, and entered with all the energy of his soul upon the interesting and delightful duties that were thus laid upon him. The same spirit of enterprise that impelled him on in his commercial pursuits, inspired him to look around him upon the existing moral desolations, and push in this direction and in that, and plant the standard of religion wherever there was good to be done.

He hailed the dawning of the Sunday-School enterprise, as soon as its light broke upon this country, and was among the first to give it a trial in New-York. His efforts, too, in behalf of seamen, especially in sustaining the Bethel prayer-meetings, and establishing the seamen's church—all speak the same active outworking principle of the fear of the Lord. A man may make princely donations and bequests from other motives; but it is difficult to conceive that he should go and establish a prayer-meeting among the degraded and vicious, and labor for their spiritual good, without some impulse derived from "the fear of the Lord." Let it not be forgotten, then, in Ansonia, that this place was founded by one who was not ashamed to be known as a God-fearing man: one with whom the fear of God was a principle strong enough to cast out all other fear: one who bowed his neck in his youth, to the yoke of the Redeemer, and did not cast it off in his manhood, nor to the last day of his life. Consigned in early life to orphanage, he made choice of God for his Father, and clung to his guiding hand through all his long journey to the grave. And what father ever repaid the filial confidence of a son so well? Who has been led along in a brighter and more desirable pathway? Who has scattered blessings more than he? Who has oftener met the speaking smile, or the grateful tear from those who have been blessed by his bounty? Who has gone down to the grave with so many to whom his memory is dear; so many to rise up and call him blessed?

With him kindness to man was one of the fruits of piety towards God. Hence it was not fitful and occasional, but constant. He waited not to be importuned: his benevolence was spontaneous. It was manifested, not merely when the subscription paper was presented, or the plate was passed, but often when no one else thought of it, and nothing of the kind was expected. "The good man showeth favor and lendeth." This was one of his favorite methods of doing good. He loved to help individuals as well as communities, by inducing them to help themselves. And no man ever did this with a more accurate discernment of character, and of the probabilities that his kindness would not be abused. I am informed, by those who have long been observant of his habits, that he has probably assisted more who have been unfortunate and poor, to get a start in life, than any man of our times.* Mr. Phelps seldom mistook his man: he intended to bestow his acts of kindness with discrimination, and where they would do some good: and he was generally successful. He ordered his affairs with discretion.

But it was not only in the way of lending to those who needed the accommodation, that he did good with his money. As you are all well aware, he has been the liberal patron of every enterprise that he believed was doing good. He has for years cast in with the rich, his gifts, large and munificent as any of theirs, into the treasury of the Lord. He has seen the time, too, when with the poor widow, he "cast in more than they all." In his native place there lived, in the days of his boyhood, a young man, of ready memory, and much fluency of tongue, who was a Universalist. He was familiar with the Scriptures, and evinced so much talent in perverting them, that many became the dupes of his sophistry. In the revival of religion in which young Phelps was brought into the kingdom of Christ, this man was converted too. It soon became apparent that his talents might be made of great service in the ministry of the gospel, if he could be prepared for it. But it was necessary to raise funds to support his family, while he should be pursuing his studies with a neighboring clergyman. Young Phelps had saved from his earnings, twenty-five dollars. This was all that he was worth: and yet every cent of it he cheerfully contributed to aid in preparing that man to preach the gospel. That was doubtless the greatest gift he ever bestowed. If one year ago he had contributed a million of dollars, perhaps it would not have been equal to it. Noble testimony from that young heart to the power and excellence of a preached gospel! Noble sacrifice of that cherished treasure, for the honor and glory of the Redeemer! Who can tell the influence of that act upon his own mind, through the whole of life? Who can show us that his subsequent prosperity was not the direct fulfilment of the promise of Christ, that those who make such sacrifices for him, shall receive manifold more in this present world?

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* As a specimen of the spontaneousness with which he often performed acts of this sort, I give the following. He was once attending an auction sale of metal, where he saw among the buyers, a man who made, as he thought, a fortunate bid, but surprised him by the smallness of the quantity that he decided to take. He had never seen the man before, but as he knew that it could not fail to be for his advantage to take a larger quantity at the price, he suggested to him that he would never get it at so low a rate again; this brought out the fact that the man had gone the entire length of his purse; without another word, Mr. Phelps offered to furnish him the money to buy a hundred boxes instead of thirty, as he at first proposed, and the bargain was made. This proved a timely and valuable assistance, and laid the foundation for a pleasant acquaintance between them in after life. This gentleman, who related the incident himself, died a few years since, a wealthy and respected inhabitant of our own town.

Here is a point that is well worthy of the consideration of all the young men of Ansonia. The providence of God, my young friends, will have something to do with your future prosperity in the world. And can you do better than to begin life as he did, by remembering your Creator in the days of your youth—by lending to the Lord—by laying up treasure in heaven? The man whom he thus aided in introducing to the work of preaching the gospel, proved worthy of the effort that was made in his behalf. He became a devoted and very useful minister of Christ, and died a few years since, in one of our Western villages, in a good old age. A warm friendship existed between them while he lived, and Mr. Phelps aided in preparing two of his sons* for the same sphere of usefulness.

The career of benevolence that was thus begun, was continued through the whole of his subsequent life. To go no further back than the term of his residence in New-York, we find him aiding in establishing the Seamen's Friend Society,—the Seamen's Bank for Savings, of which he was a director, from its organization to the day of his death,—the Bible Society,—the Tract Society,—the Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, Temperance, Peace, Foreign, Evangelical, Colonization, Education, and other societies of a similar kind. Not one has been formed in the city of New-York, for the last forty years, in which he has not taken an active part, continuing his patronage until his death.† He has been for years President of the Blind Asylum. By his frequent visits, the pupils had become familiar with his voice, and exhibited their affection by crowding around him, taking his hands, and following him from room to room, and lingering around him as long as he remained. When it was made known to them that he was forever gone, there was much deep distress among the inmates. And some of you can tell with what touching pathos they chanted his requiem when he was gathered to the dust. Truly, he "sowed by the side of all waters," and in every land the seed is now blossoming, or the harvest is white. May his mantle fall on all those who inherit his wealth, and on the inhabitants of this place which inherits his name.

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* One of them was the late Dr. Adams, of Syracuse, whose wife was a niece of Mr. Phelps.

† The Colonization enterprise was to his mind a great and grand one, promising, as he viewed it, a home to hundreds of thousands of the colored race from our own country, and the blessings of the gospel to the darkened continent of Africa. He was the sincere friend of that portion of our population, and treated them as became a friend. When he saw in any one of them the image of Christ, he was not ashamed to own him as a brother: he often invited the black man to his house and to his table, and introduced him to other invited guests.

All who have known him are well aware that he was remarkable for his prompt and fixed decisions. He saw all that he cared to see of a matter, almost at a glance, and his line of action in regard to it was determined as soon. And when a point was thus settled, it was of no use to attempt to change him; his heart was fixed. This is a quality that implies a mind of no ordinary power—it is not safe for weaker minds to act altogether in this way. Their decisions would too often prove rash and hurtful, and require to be reviewed. But in regard to the great governing principles of life, it is safe and it is wise to imitate him. The sooner these principles are fixed with a decision that neither life nor death, nor time nor eternity can change, the better. It is interesting to imagine how such a mind as that of Mr. Phelps must have acted in that season of religious awakening with which his piety commenced. He had been taught before, that he needed to know the power of divine grace upon his heart, and he believed it; but it remained for him to contemplate eternal things in that strong and clear light that brings them near, and makes them real; "to taste the word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and feel that the great question of life and death was pressing for a decision and could not be delayed. There were thoughts of God and of Christ; of the soul and of death; of the judgment and of eternity; of heaven and of hell; of a life of piety, and a life of sin; and now was to be made the decision that was to turn the scale for the one side or the other. What inward heavings, what tumult of soul, what struggles, what conflicts convulsed his soul at that hour! But there was a mind that had a perception of the great, the noble, and the true; even in the things of this world, he was disposed to turn away from whatever seemed trivial or narrow or small, and give his preference to that which had the aspect of greatness, and gave promise of large and important results. How then must the grand and mighty conceptions of religion, of God and eternity, have engrossed his powers, and expanded before the vision of his soul, until they filled all the field of his view, and shut this present world away from his thoughts! Methinks I can penetrate the workings of his mind at that hour. "Here," said he, "is something worth living for; an object vast enough for the largest ambition of man; an object grand enough for the whole of life, and for the life to come. Now I see man divested of his littleness; if sin has made him little, God has made him great; the soul is great; its Redeemer is great; eternity is great; the inheritance and glories of heaven are great; I will not waver, my heart is fixed; I will live for God; I will seek the glory of his kingdom; I will have respect unto the recompense of the reward." Here is the true explanation of his willingness at that time, to give up for the cause of God, the whole of that little pittance which he had toiled so long to gain. He had given his soul to God; there was no wavering, no indecision, no half consecration; he had made a transfer of himself—the entire man, to the kingdom of Christ; and what now were a few dollars and cents? There was needed that element of stern, inflexible decision in his piety; without it, the world as he encountered it, would have broken his anchor-hold, and torn him loose from God and from heaven. But by the grace of God, that decision of character that never faltered in other things, made him unwavering here. It reached on through the whole of life; it will never be shaken while eternity rolls.

Doubtless all who are before me, will be interested to know, if his death " became him, like his life." Without opening the door of that room in which weakness and decay are doing their work upon his manly frame, and the near anticipation of the closing scene is taking hold upon his soul, I may say, in reply, with no qualification or reserve, there is nothing to be witnessed there, that is not the appropriate fruit of such a life as his. He has always been a man of action rather than of words. He has never been forward to speak of his own exercises and feelings, but has chosen to manifest them rather by his works. But he has always loved the cause of Christ, the meetings for prayer, and the songs of Zion, and the communion of God's people, and he loves them still. He exhibits no raptures, no ecstacies, no out-bursting triumphant joy: but all is calm and peaceful, betokening a staid and implicit faith in the Saviour of the world. He builds no hopes upon his past good works, his charities, his bequests:* he knows

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* The distribution of his property was in keeping with his character for benevolence; large sums being given to charitable and religious objects, which amount to a total of over half a million of dollars. After providing liberally for his widow, he gives $100,000 to each of his 6 children, $10,000 to each of his 22 grand-children, and an additional $5000 to each of them, to be paid by the executors, with the injunction from him to use the increase of this fund sacredly for benevolent purposes, and transmit to their heirs with the same injunction, and after making several bequests to relations, has left the following sums to various benevolent objects, providing for their payment by instalments during a term of years:

To the American Bible Society $100,000; to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, $100,000; American Home Missionary Society, $100,000; to literary and theological education in Liberia, Africa, subject to the control of the executors, $50,000; Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., $5,000; Institution for the Blind, $5,000; N. Y. State Colonization Society, $5,000; Auburn Theological Seminary, $3,000; Half Orphan Society, Fourth av. $1,000; Colored Orphan Society, $1,000; Congregational Church, Simsbury, Conn., for use of the poor, $1,000.

In addition to the above, Mr. Phelps, just previous to his death, placed in the hands of his son $100,000, the interest to be used at his discretion for the spread of the Gospel, and the principal eventually to be invested equally for the benefit of the American Bible Societies, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. This disposition of Mr. Phelps' property, including the amount given to each of his twenty-he has but given to God his own. He knows they are all too insignificant and too worthless to avail anything as a price for the favor of God, and a heavenly home. He speaks of himself, again and again, as "a poor lost sinner, having no hope but in his Redeemer's blood." And he speaks thus because he feels that it is true. No man on earth could have embued his mind with such convictions, if there had not been something within to respond to them. He felt that there was no hope for him, but in the redemption that was wrought by Christ Jesus: but there he found hope, assurance, and rest for his soul. There was nothing in that chamber of sickness, that seemed like doubt:* he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that he would keep that which had so long been committed to him.

A fuller account of his last hours we shall doubtless have, but it will not vary in its general tenor from this. They were the last hours of one whose testimony for Christ had been already given, in a series of benevolent and Christian acts that marked a long and resplendent pathway; a pathway which he had trodden for more than half a century with a true, and firm, and steady step. With that same step he advanced to the last milestone of his journey; he changed it not, till he came in sight of the mark, and clasped the goal. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." He lives beyond the term of life: his name and his influence cannot easily die.

I have endeavored to set forth something of the reasons which we have to cherish the memory of our late patron and friend; he deserved it at our hands, by his character; he deserved it by his worth; he deserved it by his example, by his acts, and by his gifts. There is no point of view, that does not afford us ground for unfeigned satisfaction that the place we inhabit is so euphoniously linked to his memory. May his kindred never have occasion to complain that we have inherited his name only to disgrace it. That no such occasion may be given them, let us ever bear in mind, that the name of our village is a standing and emphatic rebuke of all that is low, and trivial, and unworthy of the true dignity of man. It is as if we beheld carved in huge capitals upon the rocky battlements of these hills, and written all over our public buildings, and our factories and stores—"Let not your life be consumed with trifles: aim at something that shall be worthy of creatures that were formed for immortality: be earnest, energetic, fearless men: let there be decision, wise and unflinching, in your personal, and in your public aims: aim at achievement: make your village a model village—a pattern of

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two grand children, makes the munificent bequest of $581,000, for religious and benevolent purposes.

[*] When his friends expressed to him their assurance that God would continue the supports of his grace to the last, and that the Saviour had prepared a mansion for him in heaven, he replied, not with a wish or a hope that it might be so, but with the full assurance of faith, in such utterances as these: "O yes, I know it; I believe it."

SERMON DCXVI.

BY REV. CORNELIUS C. VAN ARSDALE, D. D.

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THE WISDOM OF WINNING SOULS.

"He that winneth souls is wise."—Prov. xi. 30.

The word of God plainly declares, and all its provisions and revelations are based on the fact, that man, as a spiritual and immortal being, in himself, is lost. In his natural estate, he is lost from the way of truth. Sin has darkened his mind, obscured its perceptions, and perverted its powers. He is lost from the way of peace. Struck by the objects of sense, and seeking his supreme good in the things of time, his soul remains unsatisfied, unblest. He is lost from God, the chief good, the only satisfying, the only enduring good. As sin has destroyed God's image in his soul, so it has alienated his affections from God; it has produced indifference, and coldness, nay even "enmity" in his heart towards God, his creator, preserver, and judge. Being thus lost from all communion and friendship with God, he is a wanderer from God, from the sweet joy and the sanctifying power of his love, and the blessed hope of his favor; he is the creature of vain desires and of unholy affections—and consequently to him a holy God is an object of dread; death, the king of terrors, and eternity, covered with gloom; for as he is lost from the way of spiritual peace here, so he is lost to the soul-cheering prospect of happiness hereafter—he is lost from the way to eternal life, and is pursuing the way to eternal death. This truth, plainly implied in our text, and confirmed by observation and experience, is spread out clearly on every page of the inspired word; but it is only in the light of that inspired word that we can see revealed the full extent, and the appalling nature of that ruin in which man is involved by sin; how completely, how hopelessly and forever he is lost in himself. It is only in the light of that word, that we can form anything like an adequate idea of the appalling nature and effects of sin, or of the value of that soul which by sin is lost. Here we learn its exalted origin, its deep pollution, its awful guilt. We see what it is for a soul to be lost here, and to remain lost, and be lost forever. By this light we follow it through the darkness of death—we behold it at the bar of its holy Judge—we hear it condemned by his righteous law—we see it hurled from his lofty throne—hell opens to receive it—the fire that never shall be quenched is flaming around it—the worm that never dies is gnawing within it—damned spirits and fiends of darkness are exulting over it. And from that abode of horror the cry comes back to earth—lost!—lost!—lost! A soul is lost. O, what a loss is there! We fly to the page of infallible truth, and ask how long—how long is this agony of death, this remorse, and despair, and torment to last? The answer is—"everlasting punishment"—"eternal death"—"the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and forever." This is a soul finally lost. No earthly calamity can be compared to this—no imagery of mortal woe, however agonizing and crushing, can adequately illustrate this. This is the penalty, and, if left to work out its own results, the inevitable effect of sin.

But the text also reminds us that with the living, the soul is not yet beyond recovery lost; it may be saved. Jesus Christ came into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost." Through the abundant and all-sufficient provisions of the gospel, that darkened mind may be enlightened, those alienated affections brought back to God, that precious soul re-instamped with the divine image—its sins pardoned, its inward peace restored, and its immortal life of knowledge, holiness and joy secured. This is the grand, the sublime purpose of the gospel; and this is the "great salvation" which, if truly embraced during the period in which its provisions are available, that gospel achieves. Among the various means appointed of God by which this glorious gospel is made successful in winning souls, the christian ministry holds a prominent place; for "it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This is especially the design—the great object of the ministry. It is this object which magnifies the office. It is not in assuming high-sounding titles, as Pope, or arch-bishop, or arch-deacon, or diocesan-bishop—offices and even titles which are not found in the word of God, that men magnify this office. It is not by wrapping themselves up in the icy folds of a distant and pharisaical dignity; not by wearing the aspect of mere external sanctity; not by saying in their conduct to publicans and sinners, Stand aside, for "I am holier than thou;" not by playing the orator before men to win their praise; not by acquiring fame merely for their learning and talent, that they magnify their office. Nay, by things like these they pervert and impiously desecrate the office. All such ends are infinitely too low. It is the office, as it should be the joy and glory of the christian minister, to aim at nothing less than saving the lost, than winning souls to Christ. It is because this is the great object of the office,—that notwithstanding all the sacrifices he is called to make of a temporal nature, all the trials he is called to bear; though no profession or pursuit is so much abused by men, and, in the great majority of cases, so poorly paid; still he is wise who, with his heart warmed with the love of Christ, cheered with the hope of heaven, and impelled by a yearning, earnest desire for the salvation of men, selects this *above all* others, as the work of his life. It is in this view of it, that all other professions and pursuits sink into nothing in comparison with it. They are directed principally to the things of time; this aims directly at eternal things. They relate chiefly to winning the pleasures, or riches, or honors of earth; the great object of this is to win souls from sin and death, to a blissful and glorious immortality. To such, therefore, especially, though not exclusively, for the duty rests on all as the privilege is open to all, we may say, "he that winneth souls is wise."

We consider the text then, as affirming THE WISDOM OF WINNING SOULS. Upon this subject there are two propositions which especially claim our attention.

First. *To win souls requires wisdom.*

Secondly. *To win souls is an evidence of the highest wisdom.*

I. *To win souls requires wisdom.*

Wisdom may be defined, the selection of the best ends, and the pursuit of those ends, with such devotion and diligence, and by such means, as are adapted to secure their attainment.

Wisdom then is requisite to see the vast importance of the end proposed in winning souls; to appreciate the unspeakable value of the soul: to judge of it as God describes it, as lost in itself, and yet not beyond recovery lost; as precious, though it be beyond all price; and, imminent as its perils are beyond our power to describe, that which may yet, through the provisions of the gospel, be saved with an everlasting salvation, and saved by man's instrumentality. And when wisdom selects this as its great end and aim, wisdom is further necessary to perceive—

Wherein a soul is lost.

When it is won, and

How to win it.

To be instructed on these points, if man is wise, he will go to the fountain of wisdom. He will not rely upon the word of man, but go to the word of God. He will not take his thoughts from any finite and fallible mind like his own, but, in a teachable and prayerful spirit, study the page of inspired truth, that the thoughts in his mind may come to it from the mind of God, that the same views which are held in his mind may be those that are transmitted to it from the infinite mind.

1. Now while we do not find that God tells us that man lost any mental faculty by his original transgression; or that we have not now every faculty which Adam had in his innocence, yet we do find that death, temporal and spiritual, and consequently, unless grace interpose to save, eternal, was inflicted, and has descended with his posterity. If we examine the law of God—which expresses from the divine mind a rule of action for man, and points out what, in the nature of things, would be the state of man's heart, and as the effect of this, the character of his life, if all was right with him, we need go no farther than the first commandment, as our Lord expressed it, to see tha

himself is lost, and *wherein he is lost.* Supreme love to God, as the all-directing, all-controlling motive and affection of the soul, is what that law requires, and that on which all its other requirements are founded. If the heart was right, this would be its spontaneous, its cheerful offering; for God only is worthy of, and to God only is due, the supreme love of the soul. And any soul in which that supreme love is not, and has not always been, thereby exhibits its alienation from God and deep depravity—breaks the law of God, and is under its condemnation. Men are lost, then, by this inward, spiritual blindness, alienation and depravity; and they are lost as to the possibility of salvation on the ground of their morality—their merits; for having failed, in any degree or at any time, fully to comply with that law, they are under the law condemned, guilty, lost.

2. He who would win souls must be wise to know *what it is to win a soul*, or *when a soul is won.*

From what has already been said, it will be evident that a soul is not won as long as it rests on any merit in itself, as the ground of its hope. It must have good works, but they must be the fruit of faith, not the ground of it. There must be good works to prove that faith and love are genuine, and living in the soul; for where they are, these will as certainly be, as warmth will be where there is fire. There is do salvation, therefore, without good works. But if the law has ever been broken, then "by the deeds of the law can no flesh living be *justified.*" A soul is not won, therefore, merely because the outward life may be blameless or commendable in the sight of men.

A soul is not won when it is brought merely to adopt any abstract or speculative belief, however orthodox. Essential as a sound and orthodox faith is, as controlling and directing the exercises of the soul, and the motives of our action, and God judges of all actions by the motives from which they proceed, yet it is possible to hold even "the truth in unrighteousness"—to have "a name to live while we are dead." "The devils believe and tremble."

A soul is not won merely because it may be interested on the subject of religion—or because it may for a time be convicted of sin, and then this conviction may subside, and it may relapse into a state of indifference which it mistakes for conversion. To be won, it must be interested on the subject of religion, it must be brought to feel its sin and its guilt—but it must be brought also to accept of Christ—to loathe and renounce sin—to feel the attractions of Christ and of holiness—and, with the spirit of Christ, to enter upon a new and holy life.

A soul is not won merely because a man connects himself with the visible church. There was one at least among the number of our Lord's professed disciples, who attended on his personal ministrations, in whose heart covetousness was still a reigning passion, and whose epitaph, as written by the finger of the Master himself, is—" it were better for that man if he had never been born." Now so far as any outward and visible organization is regarded, he surely was connected with "the true church"—the church to which Christ himself ministered, and yet his soul was not won; it was lost. Though united outwardly with the church, his soul remained lost under the dominion of that "covetousness which is idolatry," and which, we have great reason to fear, is still the reigning passion, and therefore will prove the damning sin of many a one in our day, and in this city, who is connected outwardly with the Church; who is striving to serve two opposite masters, God and Mammon; and who by his coldness and lukewarmness in the service of God, and his worldly-mindedness, his activity and devotion in the service of Mammon, proves which is his master. While therefore we are not to undervalue the holy sacraments as instituted by Christ, nor to consider a soul won which neglects them; while they are his own appointed mode of an open confession of him before men, and means of strengthening and cultivating grace in those who have grace; and while we are told in his word that those who receive him keep his commandments, and he says "this do in remembrance of me;" yet are we to guard carefully against mistaking a *profession* of religion for the *possession* of religion, or supposing that a connection with the visible church, necessarily implies a connection with the true and spiritual church of Christ. Here is the fearful peril of magnifying any outward form of church organization to the arrogant exclusion of others. Relation to "the church" in such cases, comes to be viewed as a substitute for relation to Christ; and an outward profession, as a substitute for spirituality of mind, and a justifying and sanctifying faith. It is the *soul* which is to be won, and while that remains unregenerate, under the dominion and curse of sin, supremely occupied with and devoted to the world, whether in the church or out of the church, God tells us, that, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature." The soul, then, according to the word of God, is won only when it is "born again;" when, in its perceptions of truth, in its affections, desires, motives and aims, it is "a new creature," and has entered on a new, spiritual life, in which "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." The evidence of it, is a personal experience of repentance of sin, of trust in the atoning merits of Christ as the only ground of justification before God, of "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and the outward illustration of these inward and spiritual graces in all holy living. When therefore Christ tells us that a man must be "born again" if he is ever saved, it is evident that it is no slight change—no little reformation, which proves a lost soul won; it is no mere outward morality, however blameless, no mere external forms or relations, no momentary and evanescent goodness, "like the morning cloud," which proves the lost soul is won; it is like life from the dead, for it is a new spiritual and heavenly life wrought in the soul. Nothing short of this will do; for without this, a man cannot see the kingdom of God. Now it will at once be seen that this is something wholly beyond the power of man to effect.

From the very nature of this great moral change—this new spiritual birth—it is self-evident that God only can effect it; the efficient, new-creating power, is to come from God. And so in his word he plainly declares it to be the work of his Holy Spirit.

Yet in our text, and other passages of Scripture, man is said to win souls. But it is beyond man's power to regenerate the soul, by which only it can be won.

3. *How then are souls to be won?* Now observe it is declared to be the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Holy Spirit, exerted over the soul. It is then a spiritual work—spirit acting on spirit, enlightening the understanding, or giving vivid perceptions of truth, unfolding the nature of sin, and the soul's sinfulness to itself, exhibiting an all-sufficient Saviour, awakening trust in him, gratitude towards him, love for, and devotion to him. It is not spirit acting on matter, or on a machine, or on a brute. It is spirit acting on a soul endowed with reason, with susceptibilities, with affections, with sympathies, and with a will, which is controlled by its judgment and affections. Now though, as we have seen, in man's natural state these, so far as any holy action, any spiritual life towards God is concerned, are, in the language of Scripture, dead, yet it is through these that the divine Spirit breathes a new and divine life into the soul; and therefore the great instrument by which the regeneration or sanctification of the soul is effected, as declared by himself, is the truth of God. Why are there no cases of regeneration in heathen lands? All man's power is there; man's conscience is there; the Spirit of God is there; but the word of God, that word which is "as a fire and a hammer," to melt and break the heart, is not there; that gospel through which the soul is "begotten again to a lively hope," is not there.

It is then by the truth, as declared in God's word, that the lost soul is won; and this truth being presented, and pressed home by man, and applied and made effectual by the Spirit, is the only instrumentality of winning souls. So we find that unbelief of God's word originally caused the loss of the soul; and a true belief of Christ's gospel is that which wins the soul. Its great message is "he that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Faith, a vivid, practical belief of the truth, lies at the foundation, and is the living root of every Christian grace. But that belief is a belief of the truth; then the lost soul must be shown the truth; and although this is done in the Scriptures, yet has God also instituted the Christian ministry, by which that truth is to be reiterated and urged by the living voice upon the attention of men.

Wisdom, then, in one who would win souls, is necessary to know that truth, to defend it, and rightly to divide it. This is manifestly necessary in our day and in our country. While the truth has made our nation an asylum for all lands, we see Ireland pouring in upon us its hordes of outcasts. They come to seek the liberties, and advantages, and blessings which they cannot find at home; but they come with the ignorance, and superstition, and false religion which have oppressed them in their own land, and they are striving to propagate here the same idolatrous worship, the same traditions of men, the same subjection to "the man of sin," which has ruled them with a rod of iron, and which would exclude the word of God from the knowledge and faith of the people. Germany is flooding the land with thousands of infidels, who having been taught at home that religion is only another word for spiritual despotism and oppression, when here, renounce all religion, and endeavor to lead others with them in the way to death. France, by its unbelief, its fashionable follies, its licentious taste, its extravagant show, its immodest art, is awakening in the minds of multitudes an idea, that simplicity of manners, purity of thought, and modesty and devotion of spirit, exhibit a want of refinement, and belong rather to simpletons than to persons of intelligence and position. Now we might at once confound all such reasoners by simply asking whether for ourselves or for them, there would be any advantage in making America an Ireland, or a Germany, or a France? If not, what has made our form of government, our institutions, our general morals, our freedom from religious intolerance, so much better for the masses of the people, than in their own countries? It is the diffusion, the knowledge, and the influence of THE WORD OF GOD. Yet all these things are manifestly exerting a powerful, and wide-spread influence over our people. We remark, then, that those who would win souls require wisdom, not only to exhibit and defend the truth of God, but also rightly to divide it, or to select, and adapt that truth to the prevailing evils, or the character of the times. The great principles of gospel truth are the same in all ages, and equally essential for lost souls in any condition; but wisdom will "discern the signs of the times," and bring forth from the word of God, with force and faithfulness, the lessons appropriate to them. Even to a superficial observer of the present state of things in this city and country, it would be evident that if souls are to be won, something more is necessary than cold and abstract discussions in the pulpit. The almost universal prevalence of the inordinate love of wealth, of idle and corrupting amusements, of wicked extravagance in buildings, in dress, in luxurious living, in short, the common disposition to live supreme for this brief span of time, should waken as with one voice the rebukes, the earnest warnings and expostulations of the American pulpit. "The prosperity of *fools shall destroy* them."

Wisdom in those who would win souls is also necessary to know what are the essential articles of faith, declared as such, in the word of God, in distinction from those prescribed in the various creeds of men—to compare the exercises of an awakened and regenerate soul, the ground of its trust, the evidences of its hope, with those revealed in the word of God.

The very expression, "winneth souls," shows also the necessity of tact, in meeting objections and excuses, in presenting truth, in drawin gout the experience, in probing every difficulty to its foundation, in suiting the remedy which God prescribes to the peculiarity of the case, in giving "to each his portion in due season."

So to win souls requires wisdom to discern and attain the spirit in which they are to be won. God declares it is only in the spirit of love for lost souls that we can win them. Terror frightens, force drives, but love *wins*. The heart then must be warmed with ardent love, if we would win souls. Even in speaking the rebukes, the warnings, the threatenings of God, we must "speak the truth in love." O, when the heart of the preacher ardently yearns for the salvation of souls; when he can say of them as Paul did, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you;" when, feeling their precious worth, his own soul melts over them, and wrestles in prayer for them; then will the truth of God come warm, and gushing, and mighty from his heart, and go home to theirs; then he will not need to borrow cold thoughts from others; his only difficulty will be to select thoughts from his overflowing mind, to control thought, and to stop in time the impetuous stream. Then he will speak with *earnestness* as one "who believes" and feels, and "therefore speaks." And this love of souls, when uttering the truth of God, is the mightiest medium through which the Spirit of God crowns the efforts of man to win souls that are lost. O how many sermons are preached, in which there is manifest no such love for souls, and which do not even seem to contemplate the winning of souls as the great aim and object of preaching.

But wisdom in winning souls is further necessary for the minister of the truth, to enable him to appreciate and improve aright the various authorized ways by which that truth may be employed to win souls. Such, for example, as first *preaching* that truth, faithfully and fearlessly, with this great end constantly in view. Secondly, imparting that truth by *catechetical* instruction to the children and youth of his charge. The good old custom seems to have gone out of fashion of late among us, or to be delegated by Pastors to other hands. But if they valued as they should the affection of the young, and the influence for good which this custom would secure to them, and the precious privilege of lodging that truth in these young minds, through which their souls may be won when the Pastors are in their graves, *they* would allow no man in this respect "to take their crown;"

they would themselves rejoice to do it. And in *pastoral visits* how directly may this truth be employed. Not indeed when the Pastor enters a house merely to talk about the weather, or the news of the day, or to get a cup of tea; but when he goes there like a tender watchful shepherd, to animate, encourage and guard, or to win the souls of his flock; when sociably and kindly, and yet faithfully, he converses with them on the great subject of their souls' salvation; and, where it is desirable, he unites with their family circle in prayer, showing that he is a Pastor, a Shepherd indeed, watching for the souls of his flock "as one who must give an account."

And, finally, he requires wisdom to know the source from which he must seek aid in all his labors, if they are to be successful in winning souls, and above all things to value the means of obtaining that aid. "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." It is the Spirit of God only that can renew the soul, but God declares that he is more willing to give that Spirit to them that ask him than earthly parents are to "give good gifts to their children." He who would win souls, then, must be eminently a man of prayer. Every subject, every text of the Preacher, should be selected with prayer; every sermon should be written with prayer; earnestly should he beg light, unction, power from God, in preparing discourses which, for good or ill, are to tell in the endless future of souls; and then from his knees in his closet, after fervent pleadings with God for his blessings, should he go to his pulpit to declare his message from God which is to be "a savor of life unto life or of death unto death."

He that winneth souls is wise because—

II. *To win souls is an exhibition of the highest wisdom.*

This is evident from

The good he confers, and

The reward he secures.

1. "Let him know," says the inspired word (James v. 20), "that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide (or prevent) a multitude of sins." "Shall save a soul from death!" Can mind conceive a greater good than this? An exalted, precious, immortal soul saved from death to everlasting life; from an enemy changed into a friend, a child of God; instead of being a soul forever lost, a soul forever won, and forever and forever the soul won *by him*. As angels in heaven rejoice over it, it is the soul won by him, as the peace of heaven is awakened within it, as it enters upon and pursues its new and holy life, as it triumphs in the hour of death, as it ascends to its home in heaven, it is the soul saved by him from death; and there it shall forever be, a happy, sanctified, glorified soul, saved by him from death.

Turn now from the soul won to consider,

2. *The rewards of winning souls.* As there is no end more important than this, no honor more exalted than this, no charity more blessed than this, so there is no purer, more angelic, more Christ-like joy, than that of being instrumental in winning souls. The consciousness of the evil we prevent, and the good we secure, and the joy of our own soul, as its deep-tender sympathies partake in the holy joy of the new-born soul, begotten by the word and Spirit of God, through our instrumentality, into the family of the Redeemed, is, even here, the richest reward.

But what is this compared to the reward which shall be his, who, in the spirit of the Master, wins souls, in the day of the Lord Jesus?

What, says the holy apostle, when writing to those who through his instrumentality had been won from darkness and death, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye, in the day of the Lord Jesus, at his coming?" O, if saved ourselves, as our own souls will then be delivered from every infirmity, and advanced in every grace, and be more like the holy angels, and even like the blessed Master, what thought can measure the joy of beholding there souls which we have won from sin to holiness, from death to life! So the word of God also declares, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever." "He that winneth souls IS WISE."

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SERMON DCXVII.

BY REV. ASA D. SMITH, D.D.,

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SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE.—THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF THE LATE REV. CHARLES HALL, D.D.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."—MATT. vi. 22.

THE figure here employed is one of great beauty and expressiveness. A high place does the eye hold, in some respects a chief place, among our various physicial organs. In the language of the context, it is "the light of the body." If it be "evil"—in other words, if disease fall upon it; if a film grow over it, so that through its exquisitely moulded casement but a glimmer of daylight steals; or if peccant humors pervade it, so that objects are duplicated to the view, or are blent together in perplexing and painful confusion; then, indeed, is the whole body "full of darkness." All its faculties are used to comparatively little purpose. The odors come to it as from an unknown land; that which the fingers touch is but half apprehended; the ear listens as to sounds from a realm of shadows; the tongue pours forth its utterances as into some cloudy abyss. The work to be done is hidden, and the hands falter at it; the path to be taken is obscured, and the feet stumble in it; the goal sought is wrapt in gloom, and the erring steps fail to reach it. Not so when the eye is "single;" when in its sound and normal state it discriminates keenly, apprehending every thing in its true proportion and relations. Then have all the other faculties their most facile and effective play. Then is our work disclosed to us, and the way of our feet clearly revealed; and whatever mark or prize we propose to ourselves, stands distinctly forth in its own commanding shape, and secures our intensest and steadiest gaze. Our whole body, then, is "full of light."

What the eye is to the body, that the heart is to the soul. It was of the workings of the heart,—or of the chief desire or governing purpose of the mind,—our Lord had just been speaking; and it was for the further illustration and enforcement of his views, that he called to his aid the peculiar phraseology of the text. He had bidden his disciples beware of earthly affections, so corrupting and debasing in all their influence. He had enjoined upon them a supreme regard for heavenly things, a state of mind so conducive to all that is pure and exalted in character. In the words of the text, under the figure of the eye, the illuminator of the physical man, he represents the heart, considered in its purified state,—with the spiritual discernment which then pertains to it, and the high and holy unity of aim which results from such discernment,—as shedding a heavenly radiance over our whole moral being. Our thoughts are brought, then, by the passage before us, after whatever refinement of interpretation, to the very topic which the plainest reader would naturally find here, the excellence and blessedness of a *true singleness of purpose*,—or, as it is often expressed, of "an eye single to the glory of God."

This high Christian attainment is commended to us, in the first place, as a source of *joy*. Prone though we are to look for happiness to the outward, its chief spring is in our own bosoms. Of the soul it may be ever said,

> "If right itself, then all around is well;
> If wrong, it makes of all without a hell."

Nay, when the seat of variant and contending affections, it is itself a hell. Of such affections it must ever be more or less the prey, while diverted from its proper centre, God. Selfish desires and passions, while they war often with each other, must all unite in warring with conscience. A dreary sense of unrest there must be; distressful gnawings of remorse; and fearful foreshadowings of coming evil. Nor is all this limited to men of avowed worldliness. The hours of gloom and despondency which chequer the pathway of so many Christians, have their origin mainly in a secret consciousness of divided affections. He whose eye is single, on the contrary, cannot but experience the purest and profoundest joy. He may have many trials; in his peculiar mood of mind there may be little of boisterous exultation; the very framework of his physical being may be such, that raptures are hardly possible to him. But there shall be in his heart serene depths of bliss, infinitely dearer than all earthly gladness. Living *on* God, his soul must be satisfied. Living *to* God, he shall have the testimony of a good conscience. By no secret stings of self-reproach, by the thwarting of no selfish plans, by the dashing *in pieces* of no cherished idols, shall his peace be marred.

Nor is his "whole body" full of the light of joy alone. The radiance of *wisdom* is there. Nothing can be judged of aright, except as seen in its legitimate relations. You were but a babbler to talk of a planet of the solar system, with no regard to the central orb. So the Scriptures pronounce him practically a fool, who lays his general plans of life, and settles the oft occurring particular points of conduct, with no controlling reference to the glory of God. To aim at that, is to fall in with the broadest wisdom. It is not only to harmonize with the nature God has given us, but with all other natures. It is to run parallel with all the lines of Providence: it is to move in the light of all the suns of all the systems of worlds; nay, it is to walk in the light of the glorious Sun of the universe.

There is a divine *beauty*, too, in a true singleness of purpose. The charm of love is there, love too intense to be diverted from its object. The lofty grace of rectitude is before us; for the glorifying of God is but simple righteousness. All that is attractive in godliness is involved; for unless there be in you a likeness to God, you will not thus cleave to him. A captivating symmetry presents itself. The character, both mental and moral, must, in the absence of the trait we dwell on, be either partially formed, or sadly distorted. It is with the one great Christian aim alone—that aim which, in its necessary scope, embraces the whole duty of man—that you have before you, duly developed, the whole man. It is only thus, too, you copy that highest conceivable form of human loveliness, the character of Christ. All the lines of beauty in that character had their centre in the glory of God; in that convergency lay the chief element of their beauty. "I seek not mine own glory," said Jesus; "I honor my Father." And in his last prayer with his disciples he exclaimed, as summing up his more than angelic life,—"I have glorified thee on the earth."

We might pass, indeed, beyond the region of mere beauty, and affirm of the aspect of character under consideration the highest *sublimity*. It is sublime, in relation to the object contemplated—an object lofty as the throne of God, vast as the divine nature. What, compared with it, are our trivial names, or the petty interests of a world,—or, if it were possible to discriminate, the well-being of the whole creation even? In contrast with the simple but exalted aim that fills the Christian's eye, the proudest exploits of the mere worldling, be they deeds of martial daring, or feats of statesmanship, or whatever heroic achievements have adorned the tablet of earthly fame, shrink into insignificance. There is, besides, a certain subjective dignity in a single-hearted working for God—the dignity of the worker himself. A firm, unbending purpose, in spite of all possible oppositions and seductions; a purpose maintained amid whatever tears, and toils, and sacrifices; a purpose that lives on while other aims, by myriads, are born and die, is in itself sublime. The attribute of sublimity can hardly be abstracted from resoluteness of will, even when the chosen motto is, "Evil, be thou my good." How much more, when all evil is repudiated, and the soul's vision is filled with all that is majestic in infinite goodness!

To singleness of purpose, I add only, belongs, pre-eminently, the element of *power*. That element could not but result, indeed,. from the confluence of all the others we have named. It comes, too, from the very continuity of effort. The flinty rock feels, at length, the force of the unbroken series of tiny drops. There is power in the coral insect,—little and frail enough, yet ever toiling,—to break in pieces the huge ship at last. Much more is power evolved, when the high faculties of man's nature are all combined, and persistently concentrated. Weakness comes often of the mere dissipation of strength—of the diversions and distractions to which men needlessly subject themselves. Let a man have but one generic purpose, and that the true one: let it run, as a line of heavenly light, through all his scheme of life; let him meet with a stern denial all solicitations from whatever plain of Ono; and let his face be set as a flint to do with his might whatever his hand findeth to do; then, however lowly may be his estimate of himself, however quiet and unpretending the method of his working, he shall wield a power unknown to many a more ambitious career. He shall leave deep traces of his influence, however unostentatiously graven, on the generation that survive him; and more and more shall it be seen, in the lapse of years, how much better the world is for his having lived in it.

The train of thought we have thus indicated, has been suggested, it has doubtless occurred to you, by one of the saddest events in the history of the year just departed. It is, indeed, no strange thing, at the close of a twelvemonth, to think of precious names enrolled in the list of its dead—names dear to the church, and prominently connected with all its schemes of beneficence. From our great national Associations for evangelical purposes, beloved Secretaries have, from time to time, been removed. We call to mind the devoted and far-seeing EVARTS; the large-hearted and indefatigable CORNELIUS; the wise and earnest WISNER; the spiritually-minded and fervent ARMSTRONG; the loving, patient, and laborious NORTON. But, for the first time in the history of these societies, has a man of God been called away, whose whole public life, and that of more than a quarter of a century, has been identified with one of them; who began with its beginning, and grew with its growth; all the tissues of his character interweaving themselves with its whole structure. On such an occasion, something more becomes us, we judge, than merely to utter in private our sense of bereavement. It is fitting, surely—not on his account, for he hath higher rewards than we can give, and would hardly turn from his Saviour's smile to listen to our poor praises—but for our own sake, and for the sake of the great interests to which he devoted himself, that we gather here this evening for this more public commemoration. And now that we speak of him, what topic better suited to our purpose than that the text suggests? What aspect of character was more exactly his? As, by the aid of his private journal and letters, added to my own remembrances, and the testimony of surviving acquaintances and friends, I have traced his course from his boyhood to his decease; as the young Christian—the collegian—the theological student—the minister—the secretary, have successively passed before me: as from the public relations he sustained among us, I have turned to the more private,—sitting with him again in the family—walking with him again to the house of God—communing with him again in the circle of christian brethren; no other passage of the Bible has seemed so to sum up his life and labors. I could think of no other as my theme. In his whole life, there was, indeed, a holy and blessed unity. Everywhere, and at all times, his eye was "single;" and for us, for his family and friends, for the church of God, and for a perishing world, his "whole body" was "full of light!"

The Rev. CHARLES HALL, D.D., was born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, June 23, 1799. His father, who some years since departed this life, was a man of strong, well-balanced mind, retiring in his manners, of singular integrity, and of simple, intelligent and child-like piety. His mother, who still lives, and of whom we may not, therefore, speak at large, possesses, it is believed, some of those very traits of character, that clearness of discrimination and independence of judgment, especially, which were so fully developed in her son. She, also, is a Christian. Charles, the first-born, was solemnly and formally dedicated to God, and whatever of divine grace has shown out in his life, may be reckoned among the innumerable testimonials to the faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God. While he was yet in his infancy, the family removed to Geneva, in this State; and there, amid all the felicitous influences of a religious household, and a highly privileged Christian community, a large part of his boyhood and youth was spent.

Charles was a modest, amiable boy, uniformly correct in his deportment. He early exhibited a decided taste and aptness for study. It is remembered that he first learned to read, at two or three years of age, by tracing the letters and words on the signboards in the village. He was not only remarkably conscientious in childhood, but, at a very early period, he evidently experienced the awakening influence of the divine Spirit. When only about five years old, as he himself has related, a little book, called "A Token for Children," fell into his hands, and the reading of it much impressed him. He had had a child's self-righteousness, thus far, having trusted in the prayers he had been taught to offer, and in his general propriety of conduct. Now, a sense of *sin and of danger* possessed him, and he began to cry with new earnestness for pardon. Soon, however, his attention was in a measure drawn to other things, and his solicitude subsided. From this time to the period of his conversion—as I learn from a minute and very discriminating narrative, written by himself when about twenty-one years of age—he was subject to various alternations of feeling; never wholly at ease, often much disturbed. Now his thoughts would be diverted by play, by study, and by romantic reading, and he would either shun the pages which had troubled his conscience, or peruse them with a stern purpose not to be moved. "I well remember," he says, "that about my sixth year, I commenced arithmetic, and found relief from my concern of mind, in the pleasure which the solution of even a simple sum could give me." Again, good books, the pious instructions of his parents, and the winning conversation of his aged minister—who, like his Master, it seems, took much interest in children—availed to re-awaken his fears, and put him upon a new course of effort. At one time, he determined to pray every half hour during the day, and for a short time faithfully performed the task, taking no little complacency, as he intimates, in this extraordinary course of devotion. At another period, convinced that he must come to Christ, and that in order to do so, he must have a deeper sense of sin, he would spend whole days "in thinking over the commandments," in order to see the guilt of his life in the comparison. "I labored, and toiled, and tugged," he adds, "to have it in my power to say, 'I am now ready to believe, I have convicted myself, I am now fit to come.'" So he went on to his thirteenth year. In connection with family worship—a suggestive fact—his impressions were then deepened, and he gave himself to religious duties with new earnestness, and with a sort of delight; yet without cherishing, or, in his own subsequent judgment, having reason to cherish, the Christian hope. By diversities of feeling much like the foregoing, several succeeding years were marked. When about sixteen, he engaged in school-teaching, and under a sense of duty, and in spite of no little derision and persecution, prayed with his pupils. Forbidden by my limits to give at greater length his own analytic and characteristic account of these preliminary religious exercises, suffice it to say, that I see in them, in many points of view, "the seeds of things." He was increasing constantly in religious knowledge. He was acquiring, with a thoroughness which affected his whole subsequent life, a knowledge of his own heart, and by consequence of human nature. And if that oft-quoted remark of Coleridge be true, as to the tendency of our spiritual conflicts to "awaken the faculty and form the habit of *reflection*," he was constantly making progress in the best kind of intellectual discipline.

His final and joyful submission to the terms of salvation, was at the age of eighteen. The last struggles of the unhumbled heart were of the most marked character. "I took up my Bible," he says, "which always lay on my writing desk, and tried to read it, but could not. My thoughts dwelt only on my own dismal situation, and refused attention to anything else. The conviction of my guilt seemed now complete. I saw that I was a sinner, in the widest sense of the word. But it was not the conviction which is connected with godly sorrow. I could not brook it that all my doings should be at last but filthy rags. I murmured and found fault with God, for not converting me as well as others; and while my reason and all my mental powers approved the sovereignty of God, my heart rose against it, and such a malignant feeling of opposition to the supremacy of his will possessed me, as makes me almost shudder at the recollection." This was the last tumult of rebellion in his soul. At the voice of Jesus, as on Galilee, the stormy waves subsided, and "there was a great calm." "O what a change!" said he, referring to his altered views of the character and ways of God, "Everything seemed new and interesting. I was surprised and delighted with so fine a theme of thought; and, as I pursued my reflections, the plan of salvation—God's dealings with me—the love of Christ—seemed to be topics enough for the universe to talk of. All these things were so sweet, so mild, so proper; the sublime truths of religion, of whose excellence I had before but a speculative conviction, now seemed so glorious, so important, and crowded in such magnificent forms upon my narrow mind, that I felt bewildered among them. Myself, too, so poor and unworthy! No language could do my feelings justice. It was some time before I recovered myself, and then the first sentiment of my heart was, 'Lord, it is enough! I will love thee. I will not murmur any longer. All is right. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight!'" Then, for the first time, the obscurations of sin removed, his "single eye" was filled with the glory of God. Then was struck the key-note, not of his whole subsequent life merely, but of that anthem which he is singing now in the world of glory!

It was an early cherished desire of the parents of Dr. Hall, that he should devote himself to the ministry. Partly, it may be, from a knowledge of their views, but quite as much, probably, from his love of learning, and the serious cast of his mind, his own thoughts, even for a considerable period before the change just related, had taken the same direction. His design was favored, especially after his conversion, by the excellent Dr. Axtell, pastor of the church in Geneva, in connection with which, in the year 1817, he made a profession of religion. His pastor had, indeed, ever taken much interest in him, having early perceived his unusual promise. The circumstances of his father were such, however, that he could render him but little aid in the prosecution of his studies. He was thrown mainly upon his own resources. Though a severe trial, this was well, doubtless, so far as the formation of his character was concerned. He learned to "endure hardness," to rely on himself, to encounter and surmount obstacles. He was the better able, in subsequent years, to sympathize, not with the indigent student alone, but with the home missionary, toiling amid manifold privations and hardships. His preparation for College was accomplished under great difficulties. For one winter, at least, I have been credibly informed, his grammar and Virgil were studied by the light of blazing pine knots, in a lonely mill, on the outlet of Conesus Lake. Here, while the machinery he tended was doing its work, he would pursue, as he could, his intellectual task; and long after the laboring wheel had ceased its motion, he would bend still, by his rude lamp, over the classic page. His eye was "single," then; it was the hope of glorifying God, as a minister and a missionary, that urged him on. An incident has been related to me, which I cannot forbear to repeat, as illustrating, in many points, his history at that period. The avails of his labor in the mill, were to form his outfit for College; but knowing how inadequate it would be, his sympathizing father made him a visit during the winter, bringing with him a bank bill, saved at home by economy and self-denial, for the purpose of helping on the beloved son and brother. It was at the close of the day he arrived, and they spent the evening together. Both were deeply affected, as the gift was delivered; for it was an offering, both knew, which had cost much, and it was consecrated to a holy purpose. They sat by the fireside—that father and son—talking long and earnestly, and when, at length, they rose to retire, the bank note was missing. Charles remembered taking it, and holding it in his hand, and thought he had put it in his pocket; but it was not there. Returning to the fireplace, he discovered a little piece of it lying on the hearth. As he had been absorbed in conversation, it had fallen from his hand, and all but a mere fragment had been reduced to ashes. Thus, by a new disappointment, was his faith tried, a disappointment the more severe, as it trod on the heels of such newly-awakened gladness and gratitude. Dr. Hall has often referred to this incident; and trivial though it may seem in some points of view, it cannot be doubted that, in the memories and colloquies of father and son in heaven now, a place is found for that gift and that loss in the old mill at Conesus.

Having prepared himself in the studies of the Freshman year, Dr. Hall entered Hamilton College, as Sophomore, in 1821. With great energy and self-denial did he here hold on his way. I have heard touching statements in regard to weary journeys performed by him on foot, and other economical expedients, designed to suit his outgoes to his limited means; expedients involving sometimes, perhaps, too great a degree of hardship, yet ever illustrating his holy singleness of purpose. He acquitted himself most creditably in all the walks of scholarship; and graduated in 1824, with the first honors of his class. Rejoicing to near the goal of his fondest wishes, he entered, in the autumn of the same year, the Princeton Theological Seminary. Here he remained, earnestly and successfully prosecuting his studies, endearing himself to all his associates, and commending, in his daily deportment, the Gospel he was preparing to proclaim, until, having nearly reached the close of the three years' course, he was called to that field of labor, in which, as it proved, his great life-work was to be done.

The American Home Missionary Society was then in the first year of its existence. That broad river, which has sent a fertilizing influence over so many wastes, was formed by the confluence of various streams. It were interesting and instructive, had we time, to trace each to its distant source. There was the United Domestic Missionary Society, having its centre in this city, itself constituted by the union of several smaller Societies; two, at least, of which—Young Men's Associations—had their origin, as reliable tradition affirms, in a Young Men's Prayer Meeting. Some zealous young disciples met for prayer; it was natural to connect with it their alms; and, as natural that, for the wise disposal of those alms, an organization should be provided. This one organization, in the course of Providence, became two. There was the old Connecticut Missionary Society, which, as early as 1798, began to care for the new settlements. There was the Massachusetts Society, formed but a year later in Boston, by a number of benevolent persons—"a small group," it is said, "which the smallest public room in the city would suffice to accommodate." There were the State Societies, also, of Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island. These had all been laboring to good purpose in their several spheres; but it occurred to some of the wisest friends of evangelical effort, that in union there would be strength, especially in a union which should involve a needed enlargement of aim. The growing wants of our country, and the immeasurable importance of its thorough evangelization, were becoming more and more apparent. Nothing less must be attempted, it was felt, than to follow, with gospel institutions, the ever deepening tide of emigration, until the length and breadth of the land should be hallowed and gladdened by them. So, by a Convention, composed mainly of the friends of the various Societies which have been named, assembled in the city of New-York, in the year 1826, that National Association was formed, whose sore bereavement has gathered us here this evening.

It has been already intimated, that Dr. Hall's feelings were early interested in the work of missions. It was his design, at first, if God should open the way, to consecrate himself to the foreign field. Before he entered College, when Bingham and Thurston were preparing to go to the Sandwich Islands, he had serious thoughts, in view of the difficulty of prosecuting his studies, of going with them as a teacher. While a member of College, he remarked, at one time, to an aged friend with whom he had been conversing about the heathen world, "I am almost afraid they will all be converted before I am permitted to carry to them the Gospel." These missionary aspirations accompanied him to the Theological Seminary. His thoughts were even turned, at one time, to a particular field, that region of all hallowed associations,

"Over whose acres walked those blessed feet,
Which, eighteen hundred years ago, were nailed,
For our advantage, on the bitter cross."

Nor did he relinquish all designs of this sort until he became fully satisfied, that in the high sphere of duty to which Providence called him in our own land, he could labor more effectually for the promotion of that one great end which engaged his whole heart, the universal upbuilding of the Redeemer's kingdom. In whatever change of plan, the "eye single" was still manifest.

It was in March, 1827, Dr. Hall was called to the office of Assistant Secretary of the American Home Missionary Society. In the autumn of 1837, he was appointed one of the Co-ordinate Secretaries for Correspondence; in which office he continued until his death. It was early apparent, that he had singular adaptations to the department of labor on which he had entered. His eminent piety fitted him for it; his entire devotedness to his Master's service, and his special interest in the great work of missions. None who knew him, could call in question, even in periods most rife with partisan jealousy, his simplicity of purpose. To the unsectarian platform of the Society, and to the meeting of those exigencies, which conflicting opinions and interests would, at times, occasion, the marked catholicity of his spirit, together with the habitual gentleness and kindness of his demeanor, was happily suited. He had, indeed, his private denominational preferences; he would forbid such preferences to no one. But as an officer of the Home Missionary Society,—nay, in his inmost heart,—the object which towered above every other, was the spreading of the knowledge of a crucified Saviour. The cast of his intellect fitted him for his work. He had great clearness of judgment; his mind was comprehensive, well balanced, and strikingly logical in its habits; he had an almost unrivalled discernment of character. This last trait was early developed. In a private communication of his to an intimate friend, written at about the age of twenty-one, I find an analytic sketch of the personal peculiarities of a number of individuals with whom he was temporarily residing, which, for clearness of conception, exactness of discrimination and graphic skill, forcibly reminds one of some of his later performances. In this specimen of word-painting, a transcript of his thinking, touch succeeds touch, not one, apparently, at random or amiss, till the whole family group, each figure having its own peculiar lineaments, is distinctly bodied forth. Largely as the Home Missionary Society is concerned with men, and injurious as wrong estimates of character may prove, it is easy to see how servicable to its interests must have been this quickness and keenness of apprehension. In a quiet conversation, when the person concerned had little thought, perhaps, of the processes of which he was the subject, Dr. Hall would often take his measure and calibre, as accurately, almost, as if he had known him for a lifetime. He doubtless sometimes mistook, for to err is human; but those who knew him best were ever slow to dissent from his deliberate judgments. He was a man of method, too, and of punctilious exactness in all business concernments. He was a genial fellow-laborer—unselfish, appreciative, considerate, sympathizing. I listened, recently, to affecting testimony from the lips of the first Secretary of the Society, the Rev. Dr. Peters, with whom Dr. Hall acted as Assistant, touching the tender cordiality of the relations which subsisted between them; and with tearful utterances is like testimony borne by the now surviving Secretaries. He was a reliable man. Mild, indeed, he was in manners, and gentle in speech; of such demeanor, at times, that a stranger might almost have thought him timid or vascillating. He was wisely compliant, if occasion required it, on unimportant points. Yet when a matter of principle was in hand, when he was evidently called to take his stand for truth and righteousness, then, whoever or whatever might oppose, he was steadfast and unmovable.

Intimately connected with his usefulness, was his high appreciation of the work in which he was engaged. To say that it was linked, in his view, with the great end for which he lived, the advancement of the Redeemer's cause, was to do but partial justice to his convictions. Its connection with that end was, in his soberest judgment, of no ordinary sort. He loved all good enterprises. To the whole round of evangelical charities, he gave ever his sympathies and his prayers. He would unduly disparage no one of them. But it was by the foolishness of preaching, chiefly, he judged, the world was to be saved. The gospel ministry held, to his apprehension, a chief place in the circle of beneficent agencies. Little, comparatively, he believed, could be accomplished without it. Other forms of influence are not to be intermitted; if used wisely and in godly sincerity, the divine blessing will not be withheld. Yet is the pulpit, God's institution, suited with divine skill to man's nature; not to this or that particular time, or place, or character, or condition, but to man as man; to man in all circumstances and all ages. Other appliances are as the scanty draughts of water borne from afar to the travellers fainting on the desert. The pulpit is as the refreshing fountain gushing forth at their feet. Establish the gospel ministry in a destitute place, and all other fitting instrumentalities shall cluster round it, and derive support from it. To all good machinery it shall be the permanent main-spring. With these views of the ministry, were connected, in his thinking, the most enlarged conceptions of the importance of our country as a field of evangelical effort. He had pondered its history; he had studied deeply its capacities and resources; with a clear and comprehensive foresight, he had contemplated its unfolding destinies. His eye had swept over the vast plains of the West, even to the shores of the Pacific. Deep had answered to deep, as he mused; and with these ocean-murmurs, the voices of the many millions had mingled, who at no remote period are to throng what now are wide spread solitudes. Nor, deeply patriotic though he was, had he a thought as a patriot merely. His motto was, Our country, not for its own sake alone, but for the sake of the world. He marked, with unutterable interest, its increasing power. He saw it the centre and the glory of all lands. He beheld it, affecting more and more, through the channels of commerce, of diplomacy, of travel, of literature, of various evangelism, the whole family of man. He noted the deepening tide of emigration, bringing to us, representatively, the whole world; binding us by new ties of sympathy to all the nations, and opening before us a thousand new channels of influence. He was convinced not only that the hope of universal liberty was suspended on the perpetuity of our free institutions, but that the spiritual interests of the world depended greatly, under God, on the maintenance and diffusion here of the pure and untramelled forms of Christianity, bequeathed to us by our godly ancestors. Let infidelity prevail here, and the note of its triumph shall be a note of woe to the nations. Let our land become Immanuel's; a land of Bibles and Sabbaths, and faithful preachers of the Gospel, and humble worshippers of God; and over all lands the chariot of salvation shall speed on its way. Such were his convictions; and it was with such great thoughts, stretching from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,—yea, reaching up to the throne of God, and down into the eternal ages,—that he gave to the Home Missionary work both the dew of his youth and the vigor of his manhood. It was under the influence of such considerations that he toiled on, with a dilligence never remitted, with a zeal that never waxed cold, with a concentration of mind that would scarce admit of needful relaxation, till, worn out at length, he lay down in the grave.

Few persons are aware of the amount and the severity of labor devolved on the Secretaries—I might say of all our great benevolent Associations, but I am now mainly concerned to say—of the American Home Missionary Society. Think of the pulpit appeals to be made, and the platform addresses; and the frequent presentations before various ecclesiastical bodies. Think of the plans to be laid for the advancement of the Society's fiscal interests; and of the various uses of the press for the enforcement of its claims. Think of the examination of proposed fields that becomes necessary; the consideration, at times, of conflicting claims; and, especially, the careful scrutiny of character so often required. Think of the supervision,—not ecclesiastical, for that is not assumed,—the general and appropriate supervision of more than a thousand missionaries; men of various peculiarities, at various points, having various difficulties to contend with, and obliged often to roll heavy burdens on the officers of the Society. Think of the more than one hundred letters received weekly, many of them not only requiring answers at length, but embracing questions of a delicate and trying nature, questions calling for not a little deliberation and investigation. Think—if secular life may help me to an illustration—of a firm of three partners, having more than a thousand agents, in as many scattered places, all doing an important and complicated business; and you may be helped to an apprehension of the burdens which, in common with his associates, our departed brother bore. In the line of public speaking, indeed, he did not largely engage. In the view of all who valued chiefly richness and spirituality of thought, in pure and forcible diction, he was an able preacher. But his physical frame was feeble, and his voice had little compass. He judged it best, therefore, that in the necessary division of duties, his should be chiefly those of the pen and of the office. That judicious, well-arranged, tasteful and most effective publication, the "Home Missionary," has, for a large part of its lifetime, been mainly edited by him. Indefatigable were his efforts, through that work and other channels, to enlighten and arouse the public mind in regard to the importance of the Home Missionary enterprize. Among his labors in this direction, I may name prominently, that little pamphlet called "Our Country," first embraced mainly in the Society's periodical, and afterward published by the Executive Committee in a separate form. Unpretending though this pamphlet is, I know no more impressive embodiment of considerations and facts on the subject of which it treats. It has been a thesaurus of material from which many others have drawn; and has exerted a wide-spread and powerful influence in behalf of the evangelization of our land. In the correspondence of the Society, a sphere of effort less patent, of course, to the public eye, Dr. Hall's labors were not less felicitous or useful. On any subject, and for any purpose, he wrote both readily and well. His style was characterized by the most perfect clearness; not a particle of mist ever hovered over his pages. He had a nice and cultivated rhetorical taste, too; and there was, in no small measure, beauty as well as strength in his periods. Many of the papers he was called to prepare in the line of official duty, are models of their kind. In correspondence, however, an important part of the duties of the Secretariat, and one to which he had occasion much to addict himself, he seemed peculiarly at home, and all his varied powers were called into most effective exercise. Here, some have judged, was his forte. In his more private letters, I am sure, there was not only good logic and all christian wisdom, but a lithe and buoyant play of intellect, an out-pouring of the heart, a variety, and freshness, and often brilliancy of style, seldom equalled. Now a condensed and pithy statement would arrest your attention; now an apt and striking figure; now a fine descriptive touch; now an outburst of most heavenly emotion. In every direction, the brightest gems of thought and feeling were scattered. I remember a characteristic expression of admiration, called forth from the late Professor Stuart, some twenty years ago, as he had occasion to listen to certain striking passages in some private letters of Dr. Hall. The same general characteristics, though possibly in lower degree, pertained to his official letters. Many a perplexing and embarrassing difficulty has been disposed of by his skillful, but honest and transparent diplomacy. To the soul of many a weary, troubled, fainthearted missionary, his discreet and genial words—his utterances especially of the spirit of Christ—have brought light and consolation. They have been—words "fitly spoken"—"as apples of gold in pictures of silver"—nerving the spirit, amid whatever difficulties, to intenser effort and a loftier courage. If to all these forms of efficiency, we add that wisdom in counsel, which grew out of the native characteristics of his mind, his christian spirit, his long official experience, and his varied knowledge of men and things; you see, in the outline, what he was to the Society, and what a breach God has made upon us in his removal from earth.

Shall we speak of the results of his labors? Eternity only can fully unfold them; yet something may be said even now. He found the Society in its infancy; he left it in vigorous manhood. I overlook not nor disparage what others have done; their praise is on earth and their reward shall be on high. I speak of what no one man could accomplish alone; but of what he, by God's grace, had an important part in achieving. He found the Society with one hundred and ninety-six missionaries; he left it with nearly eleven hundred. He found it with a revenue of eighteen thousand dollars; he left it with an income of one hundred and seventy thousand. He found it just entering on the work of evangelizing the Great Valley; ere he left it, it had aided in planting the standard of the cross on the shores of the Pacific. Ask you for results? Sum up, if you can, what the American Home Missionary Society has accomplished. Call up to your mind's eye the one hundred and twenty thousand souls that have been gathered into missionary churches—aye, listen to the harpings of many of them before the throne of God. Think of the hundreds of young men who, in such churches, have had their thoughts turned to the ministry, many of whom are now preaching the Gospel. Think of the Sabbath school influences which have been sent forth, and the influences in favor of temperance and of all good morality. Think of the power which has been wielded for the shaping aright, and the duly cementing, of the foundations of society; nay, for the rearing aright of the social edifice. Think of all these potencies in their marvellous progression, in their ever-widening sweep of beneficence, as the tide of time rolls on! I would not, I repeat it, give undue prominence to the labors of our glorified brother. Could he speak to us from his heights of bliss, he would forbid my doing so. He who, in his lowliness, felt at times as if his life had been "a failure," would love to magnify what his fellow laborers have done, and to exalt, above all, the power and grace of Christ. Yet, if we speak of instruments, was he not, in all we have adverted to, one of the chief? As, at the tomb of Sir Christopher Wren, in the noble cathedral of which he was the architect, we read this significant inscription, "Si monumentum quæris, circumspice,"—"*If you seek* his monument, look around;"—so, may we not say, For our brother's best memorial, look over our land. In every church, formed or fostered by the agency of this Society, from the Lakes to the Gulf, and from the highlands of Maine to the land of gold,—in every waste that church has reclaimed and beautified,—you behold his monument.

Nor were his beneficent labors confined to his official sphere. Some there are, whose goodness is so limited, that you can scarce help regarding it as perfunctory. Away from a certain post, or out of a certain range of prescribed service, they become as other men. It was not so with Dr. Hall. The same heart that throbbed in the Home Missionary office, he bore about with him everywhere. His eye was ever "single;" he had everywhere the missionary spirit. It was not strange, therefore, that on connecting himself with the Society, and especially after his union with her, who, having been the partner of his joys and sorrows from almost the commencement of his public life, still lives to mourn her loss, he should take a deep interest in the spiritual necessities of the great city where his lot, both as a missionary secretary, and as the head of a family, was cast.

While the Allen Street Presbyterian Church, then called a mission church, was yet in its infancy, and in great feebleness, he largely concerned himself in its affairs. With an eye to doing good, he transferred his family to it; and his presence, his sympathy, his counsel, and other personal services, were greatly helpful in carrying through its period of early embarrassment. It was in part owing, I believe, to that discernment of character, of which we have spoken, that the Allen Street Church secured, at length, the pastoral services of the late excellent and eminent Dr. White. That church brought, with the divine blessing, into good condition, Dr. Hall turned his thoughts to another field. Impressed with the spiritual wants of the eastern section of the city, he made arrangements to establish a preaching station at the place where the Brainerd Church was subsequently formed; of which movement that church was the result. Though others co-operated with him, he was the chief agent in the new enterprise. Leaving the Allen Street congregation, his family connected themselves with it. Of the earnestness and efficiency with which he labored to advance it, you may learn something from his own words. Writing to a friend, at an early stage of its history, he says: "On Christmas day, I sat down and drew up a statement and appeal on behalf of a large section of the city, peculiarly favorable to evangelical effort, and addressed it to four good men; told them the sacrifices they would have to make in coming to take hold of the work of building up a church there, and then told them *to decline if they dare.* Well, our good people have been praying ever since; and I have strong hopes that two of the four will, at considerable expense of convenience, money, and dear old associations, remove their residences to that section of the city, and bear the burden of the congregation." Among the men who, by these or other like influences, were drawn to the new church, were Harlan Page and

Joseph Brewster. Of others, still living, I may not speak. Largely concerned was Dr. Hall in all the work of laying the foundations of the Brainerd Church; and whatever good may have resulted from it, or shall yet accrue from organizations and enterprises which it has either partly or wholly originated, may be in no small measure ascribed to his agency.

May I be pardoned here a brief personal testimony? It was in that church, young and inexperienced, I began my ministry. I was an inmate of his family. He was my senior in years, and in the ministry; my confidant, and my kind and wise counsellor. He was my hearer; and some of my dearest remembrances of him are in that relation. You have a sure clue to the religious character of a man, if you do but know the quality of his hearing. From intimate acquaintance, I understood the cast and compass of his intellect; its large demands, and its capacity for searching and even scathing criticism. Advice I had, as it was needed, given in the most felicitous manner; but when I rose up in his presence to utter the word of God, it was no cold-hearted, captious censor that sat before me; it was a little child in Christ Jesus. When I left the desk, burdened, perhaps, with the thought, that little had been done for the spiritual benefit of the people, it would be no strange thing if my heart was soothed by some such remark from his lips, as, "It will do us good; it was just what we needed." Not the lowliest member of the flock could have received with greater meekness "the ingrafted word." Very pleasant wast thou unto me, my brother, friend of my earlier and my later days; and pleasant shall it be to review those scenes of the past, in our blessed re-union before the throne of God!

A not dissimilar testimony have other pastors borne, with whose congregations it was the lot of our departed brother to be connected. Nowhere was he merely an indifferent spectator. His whole soul flowed forth in the services of the sanctuary; he delighted in the gathering for social prayer; he took a lively interest in whatever related to the conversion of souls, or to the edifying of God's people. Especially did he take pleasure in laboring for the upbuilding of new or feeble congregations. Declarations to this effect, the most emphatic, did some of us hear at his funeral, from the Pastor of the High Street Church, in Newark, the Rev. Mr. Poor, with whose congregation his family have, for several years, been connected. In the same strain speaks the Rev. Dr. Condit, formerly of Newark. "I think of him," he says, in a recent letter, "when a worshipper in the Second Church; where he so often indicated his sympathy with the preacher and the truth, now with a countenance lighted up with joy, and now with a tear, not less expressive, perhaps, of inward joyous emotion. That connection with him was ever pleasant to me. By no look, or word, or act, did he do aught but cheer me."

By still other forms of excellence and usefulness, is the memory of Dr. Hall endeared to us. One of the best presentations of the duty of "Systematic Benevolence," that has ever been given to the public, was a Report on that subject, originally prepared by him for the Synod of New York and New Jersey, and afterwards published with a valuable appendix. It is clear, scriptural and comprehensive, embracing, indeed—*multum in parvo*, as it is—the substance of nearly all that has been wisely written on the subject. At an early date in his public life, he commenced, and continued for a time, carefully husbanding his moments of leisure for the purpose, and trenching often upon the hours that should have been given to sleep, an exegetical work of a serial character, called the "Daily Verse Expositor." While he was a good general scholar, striving ever to keep abreast with the age, he specially excelled in biblical studies. He loved and magnified God's word; and delighted in whatever tended to shed light on its pages. The work just referred to was, for the purpose it had in view, that of condensed, simple, yet accurate annotation, admirably executed. To Biblical Archæology, he gave much attention. With the geography of the Holy Land, especially, he was uncommonly familiar. You might have suspected this direction of his studies, from a glance at the pictures suspended upon the walls of his dwelling. There is one there still, hanging by his silent, yet speaking portrait, a view of Jerusalem,—which, though correct enough in the estimation of most intelligent persons, was to his apprehension quite faulty. "That is a good view," said a missionary from Palestine to him once. "No!" he promptly replied, "it is not a good one;" and he soon convinced the man who had been favored, above himself, with a personal observation of the original, that the picture was inaccurate. When Dr. Robinson was about to publish that invaluable work, his "Biblical Researches," so deeply interested was Dr. Hall in it, and so eager to possess himself of its treasures, that he actually begged of the author the privilege of perusing the sheets, as they successively issued from the press. I have been recently assured by Dr. Robinson, that he found no other man in America so deeply interested in the geography of Palestine, or so well acquainted with it. He not only prepared an appropriate notice of the "Biblical Researches," for one of our leading religious papers, but wrote, also, an extended and able review of it, for the "Biblical Repository."

If we pass from his public relations and labors to the inner circle of his excellences, to his private christian virtues, his social and domestic affections and habitudes, we find his character still one harmonious whole. He was in all things eminently conscientious—careful to encroach upon no man's rights, to render unto all their dues, and, above all, to "render unto God the things that are God's." Especially remarkable was his strictness in keeping holy the Sabbath. Neither by labor, by recreation, nor by travel, under whatever urgency of temptation, would he desecrate the blessed day of God. After a week's toil in a narrow room in the crowded city, he would resolutely decline walking in his garden on that day, however solicited by the early flowers, the Spring birds, and the balmy air. He would avoid the very appearance of evil; he would not even seem to saunter away the holy hours. On his return from his tour in Europe, the ship that bore him arrived at the wharf, in this city, on Sabbath morning. His family were at Newark; a little more than half an hour's ride in the cars would have taken him there. His affectionate heart yearned to greet them; but it was the Lord's Day, and his eye was still "single." So he tarried in the city until Monday, "and rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment." How he delighted in congenial society; how affectionate, and courteous, and winning were all his ways there; what a charm his intelligent, sprightly, and yet christian-like conversation imparted to the social circle; there are many present who need not be told. How careful he was to injure no man's feelings; how prompt to heal a wound which had been undesignedly made; how ready he was to enter on the most spiritual themes, and with what unction he would dilate on them, opening to you the very portals of his heart; how forward he was to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep; how faithful he was in reproof, and how kind withal; what love for souls possessed him, and with what holy earnestness and perseverance he would labor, often, to lead individuals to the Saviour; on these, and other like traits, I may not enlarge. According to his limited means—yea, and beyond them frequently—he was a liberal man. Many of the sons and daughters of poverty rise up and call him blessed. Especially did he take pleasure, remembering his own early embarrassments, in aiding worthy but indigent students for the ministry. "The assistance he gave me," says one, now preaching the Gospel, "in my efforts to gain an education, was most substantial, and was always bestowed with a cheerfulness and delicacy that made the gift doubly welcome, and constituted him a *model giver*."

It is scarcely fitting, that I should enter the sanctuary of his domestic affections. Yet it is impossible to do justice to his character without adverting briefly to the depth of his tenderness, and the varied forms of his fidelity there. Home was a charmed word to him. There, next to the throne of grace, was his heart's dearest refuge and resting-place. How, in his journeyings—especially in his European tour—did his soul often pine for it; how solitary did he feel himself! Amid the attractions of London, he writes in his journal: "Felt sad—I greatly need sympathy. I have been so long accustomed to pour out my heart into the ear of listening affection, and to have reciprocal expression of thought and interest, that without it, pleasure is no pleasure to me." He recognises, again, with a gush of fatherly feeling, the recurring birthday of one of his children. He calls them all to mind. "I looked at their pictures," he writes, "till my heart almost broke." He receives letters from home, and speaks of making haste to get alone that he might "read, and weep, and give thanks, and pray." Amid rural scenes of surpassing loveliness, he says of his dear ones: "I longed, first for one, then for another, for *all* of them to be with me." He is among the mountains of Scotland, and by associations characteristically delicate and touching, his thoughts are again sent homeward. "My attention," he says, "was arrested by a tree, which frequently occurred, growing over the precipices, and loaded with clusters of red berries,—in every respect like the mountain ash, except that the head of the tree is not so trim and graceful as that is. I asked one of the young gentlemen in company, 'What tree is that?' 'The Rowan tree.' Oh, how there rushed to my heart a tide of emotions! 'The Rowan Tree' is the title of a song which my dear girls sing, full of sweet thoughts of home and home scenes; and the tune is touchingly plaintive. Those thoughts—that tune—those scenes 'of hame and infancy,' of 'bairnies' and their 'mither dear,' came back to me here in the highland birthplace of the poetry and the music, and I melted under their power. I sought a place to weep, while I sat on a stone and sang a verse, holding in my hands a branch with its scarlet berries." But I may not enlarge in this direction. I have already, perhaps, been tempted too far. Yet why should I not show you, as it was, the heart of our dear brother? I will add only, that in all these domestic relations and sympathies, his eye was "single." He had consecrated his children to God, and for him he sought to train them. He longed, with unutterable desire, to see them all not only Christians, but eminent Christians. In a letter to one of his sons, after a vivid sketch of the peculiarities of the age, a passage follows, which may be taken as a specimen of his parental advices and appeals: "You will soon come, if your life is spared, upon the stage, right in the *forenoon* of a day of action, such as the world never saw. I would fain impress you with the idea, that you are to live in an *uncommon era;* and that you owe it to your own character, to God, and to the interests of human nature, to *be* more, and *do* more, than if you had lived at another time.

'On the world's wide field of battle,
 In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle—
 Be a hero in the strife.'"

A blessed legacy to the children, are the counsels and the example of such a father!

Though Dr. Hall's physical habit was, through most of his public life, delicate rather than robust, yet he was ordinarily able to accomplish a great amount of labor. For several years preceding his death, however, there was a very manifest decline of his health. In connection, probably, with derangements of the digestive economy, with which he had long been afflicted, he became subject to severe attacks of inflammatory rheumatism. So seriously was he affected, that the mental efforts which had ordinarily been both easy and delightful, became at times a task and a weariness. It grieved him to find his vigor at all diminished. The thought of being, in any respect, an unprofitable servant in the vineyard of his Master, was ever painful to him. He sought to avoid, or to repair deficiences, by extra exertion. The pleasure of social intercourse, which he relished so keenly, he would often readily sacrifice, that he might accomplish seasonably some official duty. Often when he returned from his office at night, exhausted in body and spirit, he would turn from those quiet enjoyments of the domestic circle, which had ever such attraction for him, to make up, at his writing desk, what he regarded as an imperfect day's labor; at the same time mourning that he had so little strength to devote to what he was wont to call his "blessed work." He sought, at times, by temporary rest, to re-invigorate his frame; but seasons of relaxation it was difficult to secure, under the constant pressure of business at the office. Loving his work as he did, unwilling as he was to impose additional burdens upon his colleagues, he was ever reluctant to be absent. When obliged to be away, the sight of a number of the "Home Missionary" would be to him as the sound of the trumpet to the war-horse. Too soon for his health, he would hasten back again.

Near the close of the year 1851, it occurred to some of his friends, and the thought came at length to be favorably entertained by himself, that a longer period of absence—a voyage across the ocean, and a tour of months, with entire freedom from his ordinary cares and labors—would be the most hopeful means of restoration. Dr. Robinson was about to sail for Palestine, with the design of further prosecuting his researches there, and he invited Dr. Hall to become his fellow traveller. Most delightful to him would have been the proposed tour—

> "As far as to the sepulchre of Christ."

It would have been the realization of some of his fondest dreams. Only by a great struggle could he relinquish the thought of it. But considerations connected with his official relations interposed, and he bowed to the will of Providence. "I have given it up," he said to a friend, "and I feel better." It was another of his sacrifices to his single purpose. The derangement of his health still continuing, however, that European tour was the following year determined on, to some incidents of which I have already alluded. The design was facilitated by the praiseworthy generosity of certain friends both of the enfeebled Secretary and of the Society, and by his colleagues cheerfully assuming whatever additional duties his absence might impose upon them.

He sailed for Havre, July 10, 1852. From that city he crossed the channel to England; and after a brief stay in London, went to Liverpool, and thence northward, through the beautiful lake country, to the Highlands of Scotland. Returning by way of Edinburgh to London, he visited some of the most interesting localities in the neighborhood of that city, and then made his way to Paris. From Paris, he passed, by way of Germany, to Switzerland, among whose Alpine wonders he made extensive excursions. In one of the mountain passes, the Tête Noire, he narrowly escaped with his life. The mule on which he rode, making a false step, rolled from the path with him, into the rocky bed of a river below. It was marvellous that the effect of the fall was only a few bruises and a momentary stunning. It was of God's goodness; that he might die among his kindred, and that religion might be honored by his last utterances. By way of Marseilles, and other cities on the Mediterranean, he visited Rome. After spending a short time there, he returned through France to England, and thence sailed for home; the whole period of his absence from the country having been less than five months.

The developments of his character during this tour, as his journal and letters present them, were of the most striking kind. While the restoration of his health was his main object, he diligently availed himself of his many opportunities for observation and improvement. He had a highly cultivated taste for the fine arts; and great was his delight in exploring the galleries of Europe. Yet he passed through them as a discriminating and independent critic; never praising things, as his notes evince, because others had praised them; but venturing to stand alone, if he must, in his judgment of the productions even of a Rubens or a Raphael. He was especially a lover of the beautiful and sublime in nature; and in this respect his tour afforded him the most exquisite enjoyment. Amid the enchanting scenery of the West of England—in the vale of Keswick, at Rydal Mount, at Windermeer, and the neighboring lakes; among the Highlands of Scotland; at Windsor, at Blenheim; at a thousand points in the Swiss Oberland, language seemed inadequate to utter his emotions. "Such combination," he writes, in the West of England, "of grandeur of outline and color in the close-shutting mountains, and of beauty in the lakes and clean, lawn-like meadows, I never saw before." "Magnificent and inexpressible!" he exclaims, at the rimsel Pass of the Alps. "The half was never told me, nor can it be communicated in words." We are chiefly interested, however, in the manifestations of his piety. Abundantly evident is it, that wherever he journeyed, whatever he beheld and enjoyed, whether the finest and noblest works of art, or the loveliest and most majestic natural scenery, his eye was still "single," his heart rose above and through all to God his portion. He writes from the ship in which he sailed to Europe, as it floats out of the harbor: "I am well supplied with tracts, and hope to-morrow to begin my mission in a small way." He meets a beggar in Scotland, and the entry in his journal is, "Talked to him about his soul." At Stratford-upon-Avon, he writes, "The great enemy has this day sorely buffetted me, so that my joy has been turned into mourning. I go to my bed looking to Jesus—or *towards* him, for Oh, I do not perceive his smiling face. 'Return, O Holy Dove, return.'" He visits Blenheim, the famous country-seat bestowed by Queen Anne on the first Duke of Marlborough, and after a most graphic account of it, adds: "As I wandered through these grounds, and opened my heart to these forms of beauty, I could feel the rivers of delight rolling in upon my soul. I forgot the Duke of Marlborough; I had no appreciation for his military glory, or for his royal mistress. I thought only of God, who made this majesty and loveliness. I felt that he intended and adapted the world—its creatures—its lakes—its forests—its landscapes, to speak of him, to lead up our hearts to him. I felt that there is no mistake as to the oneness of the Godhead in Revelation and in nature. And my heart praised him; I cried out for holiness—that there, with such beauty of the natural world, there might be nothing but moral consanguinity in my soul." Amid the mummeries at Rome, he says: "I feel, as I see the disgusting pretence of this formal worship, this *fresco piety*, that God must be offended with formalism; and I am more put on my guard to deal honestly and truly with Heaven in my devotions." In the valley of Oberhasli, in Switzerland, he says: "My soul has been lifted up amid the grandeur of these everlasting hills. I have felt the grandeur of God; I have felt my own littleness; I have felt that it was an inexpressible condescension for Christ, having built this mighty earth, to die for the sinful creatures who creep on its surface." And at Chamouny he writes: "Here, amid the sublimest of God's works, I have communed with him, and have endeavored to reconsecrate myself to him. O Lord, who by thy power settest fast the mountains, exert that power to make this poor, vile heart all thine own." Such were the outpourings of the heart of our wayfarer in Europe—a pilgrim still to the heavenly city!

He came back with but little apparent improvement in health. Month after month he struggled with his old infirmities, till, on the 14th October, he left the Home Missionary office for the last time. Oh, had he known that it was the last, what mingled emotions, too tender and deep for utterance, would have been concentrated in his farewell look! The illness which detained him at home, he trusted would prove but temporary. It was soon discovered, however, by the medical skill which was so faithfully and lovingly exerted on his behalf, that disease had made its inroad upon the citadel of life. An affection of the heart, of a dropsical character, connected, probably with the inflammatory rheumatism that had so often and so severely afflicted him, gave decisive indication that his end was near. Having traced his life thus far, it only remains, now, that we gather around his dying bed.

He was ready to die—need I say it? Death to his thoughts was no remote event. He had kept his house habitually in order; his papers and his concerns generally, were in a remarkable state of preparation for his departure. It is said by one who travelled with him in Europe, that as they sat together on a lovely Sabbath, in the valley of Chamouny, he "distinctly expressed the apprehension that he should not live long," and while he manifested a truly christian reluctance to leave his cherished work in the family and in the Home Missionary Society at all unfinished, he expressed also "a strong desire and a full hope to be with Christ hereafter in his glory."

The first full development of his feelings, during his last illness, was about a week after its commencement. He had been suffering not a little, but having found partial relief, he was sitting at the window, looking out upon the pleasant grounds around his dwelling. The flowers had nearly all passed away, and the autumnal wind was scattering the many-colored foliage upon the paths of the garden. His countenance wore a *deeply serious* expression, with perhaps a slight tinge of sadness. "Are you watching me?" said a friend, coming to him from the garden. "No;" he replied, "I was not watching you, I was *taking my leave of the leaves.*" Then, after a moment's pause, he added, "I shall probably never see them fall again." "Is it not delightful," his friend replied, "to think of that brighter world, where the leaves do not fade nor fall, nor the flowers wither?" "No," said he, "nothing *delights* me now. This suffering has exhausted my spirits." A hymn he had loved to sing—"Jerusalem, my happy home"—was then mentioned to him. There was no specific response to this; but he soon remarked, as if he had been examining the foundation of his hope, "The most that I can say now is, that I have a calm trust in God. It has become the habit of my mind to trust him. I believe he will save me. I have been a poor, miserable, unfaithful creature. I am grieved that I have done so little to honor him; that, with the opportunities I have had for doing good, I have accomplished so little." Here he wept like a child. Recovering his composure, he alluded to the condescending goodness of God, in having put him into the ministry, and called him to such a post of usefulness as "*the blessed Home Missionary work.*" He spoke with affectionate tenderness, as he was accustomed to do, of his beloved associates in the work. "Dear brethren!" he said, "I feel for them; they have to bear their own burdens, and mine too, now." He added, "I think my public labors are probably at an end." "Do you really feel," his friend replied, "that your Heavenly Father is about to call you to rest from your labors?" "I do not know," he answered, for substance, "how that may be; nor do I feel solicitous to know. I leave all that, with all my interests, however great or dear, at the disposal of infinite wisdom and goodness." The fullest evidence did he give, by remarks in this strain, that though his worn and languid frame was scarce capable of ecstasy, he had what is better, the most perfect and cordial submission to the will of God. In a few moments, he spoke again of his deep sense of unworthiness and guilt, and then of the "fullness of Christ." Here he became eloquent; every trace of sadness disappeared; his eye kindled, and his soul seemed to dilate as he dwelt on the glorious theme.

He continued to suffer much, and in a variety of ways, especially from pain in the region of the heart, and difficulty of respiration. Yet he bore all with the most perfect patience. The last Saturday of his life, he exclaimed aloud, after a season of great bodily distress, "God of mercy and grace, thy will be done!" Toward the last, it was difficult for him to say much. Whatever he did say, however, was indicative of peace within. As texts of Scripture, or verses of hymns were often repeated to him, he would invariably respond by a look of intelligence, and by repeating the last words or line. The Sabbath but one before he died, his eldest daughter read to him, from the "Gems of Sacred Poetry," the hymn beginning:

"My times are in thy hand; my God, I wish them there.
My life, my friends, my soul, I leave, entirely in thy care."

He gave his attention quite to the end, and then said with emphasis, "I think I can say that."

On the morning of his last Sabbath on earth, as the day was breaking, a friend who had been sitting with him said, "Dear brother, it is the Sabbath's dawn. May the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings." He replied, "The Sabbath—the Sabbath—the sweet, blessed Sabbath!" His friend then repeated the lines,—

"Welcome, delightful morn,
Thou day of sacred rest!"

He added—

"Lord, make these moments blest!"

As the sun was lighting up the east, the chair in which, from difficulty of breathing, he was obliged to sit, was drawn toward the window, that he might look out once more upon the loved face of nature. It was one of those serene and beautiful Sabbaths, that had often called from his lips the exclamation—

"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky!"

A member of his family, not being aware of what had passed, said to him, "It is the Sabbath." "Yes," replied he, "it is *a smile of the Lord.*" A person who had been passing the night in the family, coming to take leave of him, he shook her hand, and said, "Good morning; the Lord bless you!" Then looking around on all present, he raised his hands and pronounced, with animation and fervor, that beautiful benediction: "The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." To this he added, "Blessed Jesus, bless them, as thou only knowest how to bless. Blessed Saviour, give them that peace which thou only knowest how to impart;" with other petitions of the most affecting and heavenly character. These were his last audible supplications on earth.

His strength began soon to decline rapidly; and it was thought his departure was at hand. This was told him; but he evinced no emotion, and made no distinct answer. It is probable he then felt unable to answer. Later in the day, his wife said to him, "We think this is death. Do you not think so?" There was still no reply. Again, she said, "We think you are dying. Can you say, as you did yesterday, "God of mercy and grace, thy will be done?" Hours passed, and then, in one condensed utterance, the answer came. Calling her from the adjoining room, and throwing his arms around her neck, he said, "Triumph in death! Triumph in death!" She asked, "Is it triumph in Jesus?" "Yes," he answered, "in Jesus!"

He spoke no more, but lingered till the following day, the 31st of October. For the last hour of his life, a slight film had been gathering over his eyes, and a tear had started forth, and made its way partly down his cheek. Suddenly the tear dried, the film cleared away, his eyes became bright, as one present has expressed it,

"With more than reason's ray."

His whole countenance was radiant as with heavenly joy. Literally, it seemed, "his whole body was full of light;" and "he was not, for God took him."

He is before the throne, now, with White, and Baldwin, and Nitchie, and others, his fellow laborers on earth; with many a glorified missionary, and many a ransomed soul, won to Christ by Home Missionary instrumentalities. "I saw him again, in my dreams, of late," said one of his dear surviving friends recently. "It was the same countenance, only the fullness and freshness of youth were there." That was not all a dream, blessed be God! The weariness and the painfulness of disease are all gone, and the lineaments of care and sorrow. He rejoices now in immortal youth, and immortal vigor. Rest thee, dear brother, in thy home above! Incited by thine example, we will toil on as thou didst—striving *to keep ever* the single eye; and when our work is done, we will go up, *to cast, with* thee, our crowns at the Saviour's feet.

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SERMON DCXVIII.

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A FUNERAL DISCOURSE.*

"For behold the Lord of Hosts doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah . . . the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient."—ISA. iii. 1, 2.

THIS prophetic declaration has respect to the terrible calamities which were ere long to overtake the Jewish nation, as a punishment for their manifold iniquities, especially their abominable idolatry. They had forgotten the Lord of Hosts; and he would bring Himself to their remembrance by tokens of his righteous displeasure. And among other evils which He would inflict, would be the removal of those who had constituted emphatically the "stay and staff" of the nation; and in the list of the useful and honorable who were to be taken away, were those enumerated in our text—"the prophet, the prudent, and the ancient." However these words may have been intended originally to designate different characters, they obviously admit of being applied to the same character—the whole may be considered as descriptive of a prophet, venerable for his years, and eminent for his wisdom.

A prophet was an extraordinary messenger, directly and supernaturally empowered by God, to reveal his secret will in respect to the future, either to individuals or the church at large. In this strict sense the prophetical office, never existed apart from a miraculous dispensation; but as the ministers of the gospel are the true successors of the prophets, in respect to a part of their office,—namely, in declaring the will of God since it has been revealed,—so we are accustomed, using the word in a large sense, to *call* them prophets; and this seems to be justified by the Apostle, when he speaks of ordinary preaching under the name of *prophesying*—"He that prophesieth, speaketh unto men for edification, and exhortation, and comfort."

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* Delivered at Dudley, Mass., Jan. 17, 1854, occasioned by the death of Rev. Joshua Bates, D.D.

Regarding the text then in a slightly accommodated sense, let me direct your thoughts, for a few moments to *the providence of God as concerned in the removal of aged and distinguished ministers.*

Let it not be said that I magnify mine office above measure, when I assert that the Christian ministry is the most important agency that has ever been established among men. It originated with the Son of God Himself; and bears the stamp of his own mediatorial authority. He has pledged Himself for its success and its perpetuity; having identified with it both the workings of his grace and the accomplishment of his purposes. The ends which it contemplates are vast, beneficent, glorious, beyond our conceptions—nothing less than the spreading of the gospel "far as the curse is found;" the healing of all man's moral maladies, and the complete renovation and exaltation of his nature; and finally, the most perfect illustration of the divine character in connection with the Mediator's universal reign. The office of a Christian minister may, indeed, in the view of the world, be a light thing, and it may utterly disappear in the splendor of great civil or military achievements; but, rely on it, God accounts it the noblest office on earth; and the day will come when those who affect now to despise it, will be constrained to recognize in it a mighty engine of divine power. True, it is held by a weak, unworthy, partially sanctified mortal; but God has his own reasons for committing the treasure to an earthen vessel. There is no minister occupying so exalted a station, but he has reason to humble himself on account of his own unworthiness; and none occupying so humble a station, but he may feel honored and exalted in the reflection that he is acting as God's ambassador, and doing God's work.

But while great importance and responsibility attach essentially to the ministerial office, irrespective of the particular qualifications of those who hold it, some ministers are greatly distinguished above others in regard to intellectual powers and attainments. The word *prudent* in our text may denote one who is eminent in this respect; especially one who is eminent in that quality which we call *wisdom.* There are those in the ministry who, beside being truly godly men, are emphatically mighty men;—men whose minds, naturally capacious and comprehensive, have been subjected to the most careful culture, and the most rigid discipline; men capable of accurate discrimination and profound research; men who have an almost intuitive knowledge of other men's characters, and a sort of prophetic insight into the future; who are fit to take the lead in great enterprises, and can make their influence felt far and wide, no matter what may be done to restrain or neutralize it. When such a minister arises, he becomes at once a man of mark—his brethren in the ministry, the church, the world, all acknowledge his superiority. He may be a modest man—he may even be doubtful of his ability to occupy the field into which Providence introduces him; but there is little danger that he will be unknown or unhonored. The light of his mind will dart abroad just as certainly as the light of Heaven; and not improbably there may come back to him from the ends of the earth the blessings of those to whom he has been a benefactor.

The exhausting labours and anxieties of the ministry are not favorable to long life; but, independently of this circumstance, we should expect that but a small part of the whole number who are devoted to this work, would attain to old age—and so we actually find it. There is only here and there one to be found, in the rank of Christ's ministers, who may properly be called, in the language of our text, an "ancient;" and the "prudent" and the "ancient" sometimes meet in the same individual. Yonder is a man richly endowed, highly cultivated, extensively useful, who has been constantly gathering wisdom through the long period of three score and ten or four score years; and even the gray hairs and wrinkles that you see upon him, scarcely betoken the waning of his higher faculties. He remembers much which those around him never knew. His experience is a volume abounding with the most instructive lessons upon human life. The little children, allured by his gentle and loving manner, come up and hang upon his knees, while he reciprocates their simple greeting, and gives them his blessing. Perhaps, his voice may not now be heard as it once was, in publicly discussing great questions of church polity, or in urging the claims of benevolent institutions, or in stilling the waves of popular excitement; but you may go to him with perplexed questions, and he will show himself adequate to solve them still; and, peradventure, when God's holy day returns, you may find him at his post, dispensing the great truths of the gospel with a vigour and unction that would not have dishonored his best days. Is not such a minister pre-eminently entitled to the gratitude and reverence of the community in which he dwells?

But no matter to what point his life may be lengthened out, he bows to the unchanging ordinance of God, and dies at last. He who framed and put in motion the wonderful mechanism on which life depends, has fixed a bound to his earthly existence which he cannot pass; and when he reaches that, the Lord of Hosts takes him away. And what are some of the duties which devolve upon the living, in view of such a dispensation?

The first which I shall mention, is to acknowledge reverently the agency of God, in bringing such a life to a close. We are too apt to lose sight of God's hand in the regularity of its movements. Because day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest, return upon us with unvarying uniformity, we find it difficult to realize that the heavenly bodies on whose action these changes depend, are only God's servants, moving in exact obedience to his will. Because the diseases which men suffer can frequently be traced to natural causes, we are little inclined to look beyond those causes, and we often practically admit the delusion, that they originated and disposed themselves. And so, too, when we see God's servant, venerable for age and wisdom, going down to the grave, we naturally look upon his decline and his departure as something inevitable: it is no cause for marvel that he dies now—the only wonder is, that he did not die sooner. But Christian faith frowns upon these illusions of sense, and sees the hand of God in that lingering process of decay, and finally, in the extinction of the vital principle, just as truly as in the original formation of man, out of the dust of the earth, there is sovereignty in that dispensation where all seems so accidental—in the operation of those second causes there is an infinite mind working out its own infinite plan. That patriarch minister has performed the work which was allotted to him; and now He, whose servant he is, has removed him to a higher sphere, and He has done it at the time, and in the manner which His own unerring wisdom dictated.

In the next place, it is suitable that survivors should gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God in continuing such an one so long among the living. When he set out on the journey of life, no one could predict at what point the journey would terminate; but according to the best ascertained principles of calculation, the probability was that he would not live to grow old. He was introduced into a world where human life is always insecure; where death is ever busy, and often does his work suddenly and stealthily; where disease takes on a thousand forms, and accident sometimes outstrips disease in the rapidity of its fatal operations. And those who started with him—how they have fallen by his side! How he walks over the dust of his contemporaries! How he stands as the venerable representative of three generations! But during the whole of the active period of this long life, that gifted, accomplished, sanctified mind, has been tasking its energies to the utmost for the well-being of the human family. The pulpit has been his throne; and from it has proceeded the broadest and deepest current of influence which he has sent forth; and this may have entered into a thousand minds, making way for that higher influence that brings light, and peace, and salvation. And much good service he may have performed in other ways;—perhaps by a vigorous co-operation with other leading minds in reforming the abuses and elevating the morals of society; perhaps in giving a safe and successful direction to some noble Christian enterprise connected immediately with the world's regeneration; perhaps in forming the minds and characters of a multitude of youth, into whose hands the great interests of civil and religious society are soon to be resigned. Shall not, then, the closing of such a career, the extinction of such a light, suggest to us the duty of thanksgiving? Shall we not gratefully ask, who but God kept that great mind vigorously and constantly employed for the world's benefit, until we saw before us a very patriarch, making ready to put on immortality?

And finally, when such a benefactor of the world is taken away, those who have known him, especially those who have enjoyed the immediate benefit of his labours, should render due honour to his memory. I do not mean that honour which is expressed by a mere formal attendance on his funeral solemnities; nor yet that which exhausts itself in a lofty eulogium, or a splendid pageant, or a towering monument; but I mean an intelligent and hearty tribute to his extraordinary worth and usefulness—a deep sense of the loss which the community has sustained in his removal, manifested by appropriate expressions of reverential sorrow. And I mean yet more than this—the very highest tribute that we *can* pay to him is to seek to perpetuate his usefulness by giving to his teachings and example a permanent home in our memories and hearts, and endeavouring to secure to them an enduring influence over our fellow men. If to do good was the great object for which the venerable man lived, can we doubt that the most welcome tidings that could reach him in his blest abode, would be that the good which he has done, not only is not lost, but is constantly working out still more glorious results, in the progressive renovation of the world. When our remembrances of him make us better and holier; when they strengthen our faith and quicken our zeal, and stimulate us to improve our own hearts and benefit our fellow men, then may we be sure that we act in accordance with his wishes, even as a glorified immortal; that we are worthily contributing to keep alive his memory on earth, while his spirit rejoices in Heaven.

Is it not due to ourselves, that when the Lord of Hosts takes away such an one, we should testify our reverence for his memory—for in so doing we open a new channel of blessing to our hearts; and in the act of embalming his virtues, there comes a genial warmth, an increased vigour, to our own. Is it not due to our fellow men—for the praise that we render to departed worth, is a testimony in honour of truth and virtue, adapted to recommend these qualities to the world. Is it not due to the individual who is the subject of our praise—for death does not abate the value of high intellectual and moral excellence; and he who has exhibited it while living, has lost none of his claims to grateful remembrance by going to his grave. And finally, and above all, is it not due to the Father of spirits—to Him who made that noble mind what it was, and gave it its right direction, and fixed it in its appropriate sphere, and recalled it to Himself, after it had accomplished a glorious work? Truly, my brethren, there are manifold claims upon us to mourn for the aged and honoured servant of God. When "the Lord of Hosts, doth take away the prophet, the prudent, the ancient," they do well who resolve to hold his virtues in honourable and enduring remembrance.

The occasion that has assembled us is associated with the departure of one, to whom the prophetical description in our text may be applied with no doubtful propriety. He was a "prophet" —he was set apart in early life to proclaim the doctrine of salvation to his fellow men. He was a "prudent" man; both in the large sense of being intellectual and accomplished, and in the more restricted sense of being cautious and far-seeing. He was an "ancient," for however little the frost of age had touched his faculties, he had filled up several years more than three-quarters of a century. But though he has been spared so long, Heaven has at length claimed him; and here, where he has spoken to you so often, he has stopped, dressed in his grave-clothes, to deliver his last message. I shall only meet a reasonable expectation in presenting you now with some brief notices of his life and character.

Dr. Bates was born at Cohasset, in this State, on the 20th of March, 1776—a date in reference to which he used to say that he was a subject of George the Third, and was three months older than our National Independence. His early years he spent at home, labouring upon his father's farm; but even in childhood he began to develope a remarkable fondness for books, which led his father, whose circumstances were somewhat straitened, to consent to his receiving a collegiate education. Accordingly at the age of seventeen he commenced his preparation for college under the instruction of his pastor, the Rev. Joseph C. Shaw; but as it was only a part of the time that he was able to devote to study, it was nearly three years before he was fitted to enter the Freshman class; and then circumstances occurred which led him to engage in teaching a school in his native place, rather than going immediately to college. His connection with the school continued one year; and meanwhile he was prosecuting the studies of the Freshman class at Cambridge, availing himself of occasional assistance from the Rev. Henry Ware (afterwards Professor) then of Hingham. It was a rule from which he never departed, to pass over nothing in his studies which he did not fully understand; and to this habit thus early formed, I have heard him say that he attributed much of his success in life.

He became a member of the Sophomore class of Harvard College, in the autumn of 1797—a few months after he had reached the age of twenty one. As he was in a great measure dependent for his education upon his own efforts, he taught a school during two of the winters that he was in college, and attempted it the third, but was prevented by a serious illness. Notwithstanding these interruptions, however, he maintained uniformly an excellent standing in his class; as was sufficiently indicated by the fact that he graduated with the highest honour—a distinction, I cannot forbear to say, the more marked, from his having been a classmate of the gifted, accomplished and eloquent Buckminister; not to speak of some others who still survive, bearing the hightest professional honours.

Immediately after his graduation, he became assistant teacher at Phillip's Academy, Andover, and at the same time commenced his immediate preparation for the ministry under the Rev. Jonathan French. He held his place as teacher for one year; and after he resigned it, remained at Andover, prosecuting his theological studies, nearly another. He was licensed to preach by the Andover Association, in April, 1802. Shortly after, he accepted an invitation to preach at Dedham, the result of which was, that he was ordained and installed there on the 16th of March, 1803.

Here he continued labouring to great acceptance, and enjoying in a high degree the respect and confidence of his people, fifteen years. There were many circumstances which rendered this a pleasant settlement to him; not the least of which was, that it brought him into intimate relations with that illustrious man, Fisher Ames, who was, at that time, an active member of his parish. He evidently succeeded in gaining both the ear and the heart of the great statesman; their intercourse was frequent and affectionate; Dr. Bates' reminiscences of his friend were equally abundant and delightful; and for several years preceding his death, he was probably the best living witness to Ames' personal habits, and intellectual and moral qualities. It is earnestly to be hoped, that he has left some record of his observations upon that eminent man, of which posterity may have the benefit.

Dr. Bates resigned his charge at Dedham, with a view to accept an appointment as President of Middlebury College. His induction to this office took place in March, 1818. Here he continued discharging his duties with great ability and fidelity, until September, 1839. Not only was his devotion to the interests of the college unwearied—not only did he exert himself to the utmost to elevate the standard of liberal education, and to make thorough scholars of all who came under his care, but the influence of his high personal character in the community at large, was favourable to the prosperity of the institution. His instructions —I say it upon the authority of some of his distinguished pupils —were specially prized in the departments of intellectual and moral philosophy, where his clear and vigorous perceptions, and his power of rigid analysis, found their appropriate exercise.

It was Dr. Bates' determination, when he accepted the Presidency of the college, not to retain it beyond the age of sixty—circumstances occurred, however, to induce him to remain a few years longer; and other circumstances subsequently occurred that led him to hasten his resignation. He retired from the office at the age of sixty-four. Immediately after leaving Middlebury, he set out to visit his daughters who resided in South Carolina; and on stopping at Washington a few days, he was, through the influence of his friends, Silas Wright and Judge Prentiss, of Vermont, then United States' Senators, chosen Chaplain to Congress. This detained him at Washington till the close of the session, and gave him an opportunity of gratifying his intellectual tastes in various ways, particularly in making the acquaintance of many of the most eminent men of the day. As soon as he was at liberty, he proceeded to South Carolina, where he enjoyed a delightful, though brief visit with his daughters, and the excellent friends among whom he found them. On returning to the North, he preached first for two months at Portland; and afterwards, for two years, as a stated supply, at Northborough. On the 22nd of March, 1843, just forty years from the time of his ordination at Dedham, he was installed pastor of this church.

During nearly the whole time since his settlement among you, his firm and elastic step, the vigorous workings of his mind, and his ability to labour in season and out of season with all the energy of middle life, have scarcely allowed you to realize that he was becoming an old man. In the summer of 1852, he experienced for a short time, some abatement of his physical vigour, in connection with a shock that was supposed to be of the nature of paralysis; but he gradually recovered from the effect of this; and when I saw him a few weeks after, I could scarcely perceive that any change had come over him. In October of the last year, he travelled as far West as Ohio, partly to visit his children, and partly to attend the meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; and after an absence of about a month, he came home highly gratified by his journey and visit. I had the pleasure of seeing him on his return, and as I noticed the vigour of his mind and body, and listened to his animated conversation, I could not but think that, in all probability, several years more of honourable activity would be added to his life. But amidst all those hopeful indications of continued health, death was lurking; and he finally came in a way of which he had given no premonition. Our venerable friend was arrested suddenly, and in his full strength, by one of the most terrible forms of disease; he endured it with Christian composure and fortitude, with his eye fixed upon Heaven, and his heart at rest upon his Redeemer's merits; and when the appointed time came, he walked fearlessly through the dark valley, his spirit evidently ready for its flight to immortality.

In attempting an outline of Dr. Bates' character, such as the occasion demands, I am aware that I must labour under the double disadvantage of speaking *of* one with whom I have had only occasional intercourse, and *to* those who have known him long and well, both as a neighbour and pastor. It is, indeed, more than thirty years since my acquaintance with him commenced; and during this whole period, I think I may say I have enjoyed the privilege and honour of his friendship; but in later years our relations have grown more familiar, and since his residence in this place, I have been several times attracted hither, not more from a feeling of veneration for his character, than from a desire to profit by his wisdom. I will state as faithfully as I can the impressions I have received in respect to him, happy in the reflection that if they are in any respect wrong, I speak in the presence of those whose superior knowledge of him will instantly suggest the appropriate correction.

In looking at Dr. Bates' character in the general, what first strikes me is its remarkable symmetry and completeness. There was no such singular preponderance of any one faculty *above* the rest, and no such marked inferiority of any one faculty *to* the rest, as to occasion a want of harmony in the general impression. You felt that the various qualities that made up the man—intellectual, moral and religious—were all well balanced. He had no meteor-like eccentricities to astonish or bewilder. He recognized order as Heaven's first law; and to this law the movements of his mind all seemed to conform. You could hardly say for what he was most distinguished, or for what he was least distinguished; but you could say with confidence that he was distinguished for doing everything well.

If I am right in my estimate of Dr. Bates' intellectual character, his mind was uncommonly clear, acute and vigorous. It never seemed to me, however, that his mental operations were so much distinguished for rapidity as for safety and certainty—whatever subject of inquiry presented itself to him, he was accustomed to hold to his mind under its various aspects, and to form his judgment from an accurate survey of everything pertaining to it. While he had a taste for abstract investigation, and pushed his enquiries into the reasons of things as far as was consistent with Christian humility and reverence, he paused in the true spirit of a Christian philosopher; at the legitimate boundary of human knowledge; never attempting to be wise above what God has written, either in the constitution of nature or Providence, or in the volume of Revelation. And when a great subject had got thorough possession of his mind, he held it with a vigorous grasp; and was able to throw it into the light of powerful argument and ample illustration. He had a keen insight into the characters of men, as well as into the relations of things; and I think he rarely mistook in his appreciation of an individual, even upon a slight acquaintance. He possessed, in a high degree, that sterling quality—common sense—he seemed to know intuitively what was fitting to all conditions and all circumstances; and he rarely took a step that he had occasion to regret, or that did not commend itself to the enlightened judgment of good men.

Dr. Bates' moral qualities were in no degree inferior to his intellectual. He possessed great kindliness and generosity of spirit, and seemed to delight in conferring favours, whenever it was in his power. He had uncommon strength of purpose—a perseverance that scarcely reckoned any obstacle too great to be overcome. He had an unbending integrity, never swerving from his honest convictions, no matter what might be the temptation. At the same time, he scrupulously avoided giving needless offence; he was uniformly discreet and conciliatory in his intercourse and was always slow to impute bad motives where good ones might be supposed. He was characteristically modest—more inclined to manifest deference toward others, than to claim it for himself. I know not what his temper may have originally been, though I should suppose, from his general strength of character, that it might have been intense, if not impetuous; but if so, he must, I think, have disciplined it into entire subjection; for I never detected in him the semblance of irritability. In his social intercourse, he was attentive to all the proprieties of life. He was perfectly accessible to all classes; and knew how to become the delightful companion even of little children. He was sometimes humorous and playful, often eminently instructive, always agreeable. His manners were a fine compound of simplicity, urbanity and dignity.

His christian character no doubt received its complexion, in a great measure, from his general temperament and habit of mind. In his views of divine truth, there was no tendency to extremes; his system of theology, like his mind, was well balanced; and I judge from what he has told me, that he would as soon have taken President Dwight as an exponent of the mind of the Spirit, as any uninspired writer. His Christian feelings and conduct were evidently in harmony with his convictions. He was earnest without being enthusiastic, serious without being austere, catholic without compromising his views of divine truth. His religion combined principle, feeling and practice—it was the truth acting upon the intellect, the conscience, the heart and the life.

As a preacher, Dr. Bates would always find favour with the serious and intelligent of any community. He might not pass with the superficial multitude for a highly eloquent preacher, but all who penetrate beneath the surface would pronounce him a highly instructive one. He spoke from the amplest intellectual resources, and what he said was the result of mature and often deeply elaborated thought. So thoroughly was his mind trained to orderly and logical processes, that it was impossible for him to write or speak at random; and hence you could detect method even in his least studied efforts. His style showed an exact taste, being distinguished less for ornament, than correctness and classical purity. His illustrations were always appropriate, and sometimes uncommonly forcible. His preaching, as represented by his published sermons, was little of a controversial character; though it was decidedly of an evangelical tone, and never faltered in its statements of any thing that he believed to be Christian truth. He preached the doctrines of the gospel, not as mere speculations, but as the vital elements of our eternal well being. He contemplated man in all his various relations, and endeavored to pour the light of truth upon his understanding and conscience, in reference to each. His manner in the pulpit was without much passion or gesture, and yet it was natural, dignified, and impressive. It is only a few times that I have had the privilege of listening to him; but I never heard him when I was not greatly interested and edified by his performance.

Dr. Bates was fitted to exert a controlling influence on great occasions; especially in deliberative assemblies, and amidst scenes of public or private conflict. It is well known that in the early part of his ministry, he was employed as counsel in one of the most perplexed and memorable cases of church controversy to be found in the history of this Commonwealth;* and if a pretty uniform tradition is to be relied on, he acquitted himself with a reputation for honorable fairness and high ability, which has rarely been awarded to any of his brethren in similar circumstances. His great wisdom, his ready discernment of what is required by a sudden exigency, his ability to command his thoughts and fellings, and give effective, utterance to both, and his well sustained and uniform urbanity, might have rendered him eminent either as a lawyer or a statesman.

If it were proper, I might speak of him in his more private relations—I might tell you what you know far better than I do—how his presence was the light and joy of his dwelling; how gracefully and tenderly he sustained the conjugal relation; how his numerous children, employed as they are, in different walks of public usefulness, are the living epistle, testifying everywhere to his excellent parental character. And I might speak of him too as a friend, drawing only upon my own experience of his friendship, and feel sure of not saying a word to which you would not render a hearty assent. But much of what might be said on these points, I prefer to pass over in reverential silence. I say again you knew him better than I did; and were it not that my duty seemed to call me to render this testimony concerning him in your hearing, I would greatly have preferred to sit down and listen to you, while you should have opened to me the treasury of your own warm and cherished recollections.

Pause now for a moment, and say whether the results of such a life as we have been contemplating, do not bear the impress of true moral sublimity. For nearly thirty years this departed servant of God was constantly engaged in the active duties of the ministry, and he always proved himself a workman that needs not to be ashamed About twenty-four years he devoted to the immediate instruction of youth; and more than twenty-one he spent at the head of a great literary institution. And, during the whole of his professional course, he has been, in the highest sense, a public man. Not only have his services as a minister been put in requisition on many extraordinary occasions, but in all great matters of public interest, of however general a nature, he has been found a ready and an efficient helper. And now, who will undertake to trace out all the streams of benign influence that have proceeded from him during this long period; especially who will even hazard a conjecture as to the ulterior results of his career, as they shall be developed in the progress of coming ages. Already, we doubt not, his influence is felt in Heaven, in the joy and praise of many a soul that has been conducted thither in the light of his ministrations. And we know that it still operates on earth, through innumerable channels. There are great men scattered all over the land, some of them belonging to the very life-guard of our free institutions, whose characters have been moulded, perhaps chiefly, by his instrumentality; so that it is not too much to say, that the man who lies there sleeping so peacefully in his coffin, is still speaking through a thousand voices to bless his country, and the world. And as that slumber will remain unbroken while the ages pass away, the living man will still be represented on earth by an influence that will act with mighty power in forming the characters and destinies of myriads. Venerable father, though the grave waits to receive thee, we expect that thou wilt still meet us in the walks of Christian usefulness; we expect that in virtue of what thou hast been and what thou hast done, thou wilt be a fellow-helper unto the kingdom of God with the wise and good of all coming generations.

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* The case of the Rev. (afterwards Dr.) John Codman, of Dorchester.

Blessed are they that mourn the departure of Christian friends; for they shall be comforted. Blessed especially are they who mourn for those who have not only lived and died in the faith of Jesus, but have been hailed as among the lights of their generation; who, possessing great powers and attainments, have devoted them sacredly to the honour of God, and the best interests of their fellow-men. Blessed are ye, my mourning friends; for in the husband and the father that has been taken from you, you are permitted to contemplate a noble specimen of both God's natural and spiritual workmanship. You find no blemish in his character at which the veneration of his friends needs to halt, or for which there is occasion to invoke the world's charity. At every step of his long career, he has been dispensing good to his fellow-men. In his old age, you have seen him bringing forth fruit as fragrant and beautiful as ever. The last words that he spoke to you, were words of love, and trust, and blessing. And when, finally, he passed down through those deep shadows, and crossed the line from beyond which no earthly voice comes back, faith seemed to render audible to you the voice of angels, welcoming him to a participation of their immortal joys. Well may it suffice as an antidote even to that deep sorrow which those weeds and tears betoken, to think of the living and triumphant faith, of the beneficent and honoured life, of the immortal crown, and, finally, of the grave itself as hallowed and guarded by Him who hath proclaimed Himself the Resurrection. I commend you to the Comforter and the Sanctifier—may each sorrowful emotion find a correspondent joy, and give increased elevation and purity to your whole spiritual nature.

Brethren in the ministry, I will not dissemble the embarrassment which I feel in bearing so prominent a part in these funeral services, when it would seem so much more fitting, that, if I were present at all, it should be only to join silently in the common mourning. It is enough for me to say that, in occupying this place, I am only yielding to a request from our departed friend, which, indeed, I never knew how to account for, but which my affectionate respect and veneration for him rendered impossible for me to decline. But you will allow me to forget, for the time, that I am not one of your own immediate number, and to meet you not more in the fellowship of faith than the fellowship of sorrow; for if he who has gone to his rest was your friend, so he was mine also; and you cannot render so high a testimony to his worth, or express so deeply a sense of the loss which his death has occasioned, but I can honestly and heartily respond to it. What remains, then, but that we who venerated him while living, should cherish his memory, now that he is gone; that we, who have thought it a privilege to walk in the light of his wisdom, should be forward now to learn lessons from his grave; that we, who must follow him through the dark valley so soon, should be quickened by his departure to gird ourselves for our own. May that spirit of prudence and peace, of enlightened charity, and well directed activity, of which he was so bright an example, be diffused through all your borders; and thus may this favoured region in which your lot is cast, take on a still brighter and more luxuriant spiritual hue, producing innumerable plants of righteousness, to flourish hereafter in the Paradise above.

Next to those who mourn the death of a near relative, this church and Christian society must share most deeply the sorrows of this occasion. It is honourable to you as a people, that you should have spread out your arms to receive this venerable man as your pastor, when he had already numbered so many years of active usefulness, and at a period when the almond tree has usually begun to flourish. The event has proved the wisdom of your choice; for you have thereby secured to yourselves, for nearly eleven years, the labours of one of the most eminent ministers in New England; and during this whole time, his force of intellect, his warmth of affection, his firmness of purpose, and perhaps I may say, his energy of action, have remained unabated.

Nay, I am assured, that his last labours were among his most earnest and effective; and that the greatly increased diligence and activity which he manifested, were recognized by some of his friends as a token that his work was nearly done. And more than that—I understand that the windows of Heaven seemed to be opening for the pouring forth of a blessing upon you, just as the gates of Heaven were opening to allow him to pass to the reward of his labours. We trust that the blessing will not be withheld; and that his death as well as his life may be hailed as marking a bright epoch in the history of this church.

It is fitting, my friends, that you should mourn for your beloved pastor; but, let me say, your mourning will be to little purpose, unless it include a devout recognition of God's providence in his removal; a grateful sense of his goodness in continuing him to you so long; a solemn recollection of the instructions, counsels, and prayers you have received from his lips; and an earnest desire, an abiding resolution, to establish permanently upon yourselves and your children the benefits of his ministry. Let me commend to your frequent and careful perusal, the excellent discourse delivered on the tenth anniversary of his ministry among you, which has lately, I doubt not, found a place in most of your dwellings. Here you have your own history as a people, with the instruction it suggests, faithfully exhibited by his pen. Here you have the teachings of his wisdom, after his wisdom had been matured by the observation and experience of a long life. Here you have the warm breathings of a spirit that knew no higher joy than that of seeing you walk in the truth. Here you have his last utterances through the press—they were worthy to be his last; and had he known they were to be such, I cannot see how he could have rendered them more appropriate or impressive. I say then, preserve the remembrance of all his evangelical labours, so far as you can; especially keep sacred this last legacy, and let it not be your fault, if it does not descend to bless your children's children.

I cannot close this discourse without reminding you of the relations which this occasion sustains, not only to the past, but to the future; without directing your thoughts backward to the ministry that has now come to a close, and forward to the dread tribunal at which you must render an account of it. The prophet, the prudent, the ancient, has been among you—have his labours helped to form your characters for Heaven? Have the truths which he has dispensed been welcomed by you in their sanctifying and quickening power? Have you honoured him as God's messenger, and encouraged him to be faithful by the alacrity with which you have received his ministrations? If so, then ye may well afford to rejoice in the review of his ministry—to rejoice in the anticipation of its results. But have ye, on the other hand, treated with contempt the message he has brought to you, and beat back the sword of the Spirit, when he has aimed it at your conscience and heart? Have you listened without emotion to his earnest pleadings for your salvation? Have you kept your eye and your heart still fixed on the earth, when he has been doing his utmost to bring you within the influence of the powers of the world to come? Have you sent him away to his closet to cry out in the bitterness of his spirit—"Who hath believed our report?" Are any of you examples this day of the hardening influence of abused privileges? Are there some among you even of silvered locks and tottering footsteps, whose spirits have received no upward tendency, but are drawn by a fearful attraction towards the world below? I warn you, every one, that though you may seem to have done with this ministry, you will hear from it again—you will be obliged to face it, with all its array of precious privileges and solemn and hallowed associations, another day. Will ye not then heed the message of warning that comes from your pastor's coffin, though ye have so perseveringly refused to listen to that which came from his lips. If not, then believe me, as there is truth in God, the grave of that prophet, that prudent, that ancient, however far away,* shall be a witness against you; and hereafter its tenant shall awake to render a still more decisive and appalling testimony. God grant that when that voice, now hushed in death, shall break upon your ear again, it may be not to justify the sentence of your condemnation, but to hail you as fellow heirs to the glories of immortality.

SERMON DCXIX.

BY REV. WILLARD M. HARDING,

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SALVATION BY GRACE.

"By grace are ye saved."—EPH. ii. 8.

NOTHING can be of deeper interest and more solemn concern to all men, than to know, and faithfully to use the means by which they can be saved from sin and its consequences. Many in all ages have felt this to be true, and have devised and adopted various methods to secure their salvation. Gifts, penances, tortures, and "works of righteousness" in endless catalogue, have been put in requisition to gain eternal life. By such expedients has human wisdom made known its folly. But the wisdom of

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*His remains were taken for burial to Middlebury, Vermont.

God has set forth in the Gospel a far different method of salvation, and has caused it to be proclaimed in various forms of expression, as the great, the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel, that *salvation is by grace*.

The text is a brief expression, but more comprehensive in its signification than any others relating to this subject found in the Scriptures. It seems to have been selected as including, and as best fitted to express, all that is done for the redeemed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The word *grace* is employed in the Scriptures in several different senses. Hence, an abuse or a misapprehension of its real import in certain passages, has given birth to many erroneous opinions, and even to dangerous heresies, in regard to sin and the soul's salvation. Among the various meanings of this term, as employed by the sacred writers, are, *piety*, or holiness of heart and life,—" Grow in grace ; *divine and spiritual influence*, to sanctify, guide, and strengthen,—" My grace is sufficient for thee ;" *salvation through the atonement of Christ*,—" Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,"—" Ye are fallen from grace," that is, Ye have departed from seeking salvation under an economy of grace, and through the atonement of Christ, and have gone back to seek justification by works of law.

In the text the word *grace*, as already intimated, seems to be employed in a sense inclusive of most others in the Scriptures, and one that cuts off all self-reliance from the Christian, and constrains him to say, at all times, and in all circumstances of his being, " By the grace of God I am what I am."

Salvation,—the deliverance of the human soul from the power, the degradation, and the peril of sin, and its introduction into the purity and fellowship of Heaven, is, in its every aspect, and its every step, a work of grace. This is the doctrine of the text, and should be admitted on the simple affirmation of the inspired writer. That affirmation, however, does not constitute the truth of the doctrine. The evidence of its truth consist, among other things, in the delay of merited punishment, the provisions of the atonement, and the aids of the Holy Spirit, which the transgressor is permitted to experience.

A brief consideration of these several topics will be sufficient to show, that for the best of reasons has it been proclaimed to sinful and perishing men, that SALVATION IS BY GRACE.

I. *The delay of merited punishment.*

If the demands of the law are within his capacities for obedience, the transgressor deserves the immediate infliction of its penalty, when violated. A reprieve, therefore, even for a short period, granted to a criminal under sentence of death, would afford evidence of favour or *grace* in the magistrate who should thus stay the hand of justice. Still further evidence of grace would be furnished, should the criminal be permitted to make an atonement that could be consistently accepted instead of his execution, and, in the meantime, enjoy the comforts and the luxuries of life.

All this is true in respect to apostate and guilty man. Embowered in his primeval Paradise, he possessed, in rich profusion, all the requisites of unmingled happiness. Endowed with powers adequate to meet all the requirements of the law under which he was placed; promised, as the reward of his continued obedience, all the means of happiness necessary to satisfy his constantly enlarging capacities for enjoyment; and forewarned, also, of the consequences which would follow his disobedience, when he failed in the slightest degree to keep the whole law, he could enter no "plea in arrest of judgment." His Maker's justice would have been unsullied, and the principles of eternal equity would have encircled his throne, had man been made to experience, at the moment of his first transgression, the utmost rigour of the violated law. The sinning angels were thus made to suffer. But man found favour in the sight of God, and was spared and placed under an economy of grace, in distinction from one of works,—an economy in which, consistently with the claims of justice, an atonement could be accepted instead of perfect obedience, or the infliction of the legal penalty upon the transgressor.

This was the first instance of grace shown to the guilty, so far as we have any evidence, under the Divine government; and it consisted in the delay of merited punishment, in the opportunity afforded the criminal to make an atonement, and in the continnance of numerous and rich blessings justly forfeited by his disobedience. On this first page, therefore, of man's history, is the record of such grace or favour, as is sufficient to exclude all boasting on his part, and to secure to God all the glory. Yet this is not sufficient; a still further exercise of grace towards the transgressor is necessary to secure his salvation. By another step, therefore, in this work of grace, we have for consideration,

II. *The provisions of the Atonement.*

Although not called to suffer the immediate infliction of the penalty he has incurred, and placed under an economy in which an atonement can be accepted, instead of the legal penalty, still the *sinner* cannot make an adequate atonement for his iniquities. The law under which he is placed is the best conceivable, for the Government of a perfect God can recognize no other. Such a law, while it must regard obedience as the *best* thing and promise to that the highest reward, must also regard disobedience to its requirements as the *worst* thing, and threaten to that the severest penalty. A penalty of this nature can be nothing less than misery, unmitigated and eternal. This, the Scriptures assure us, is the penalty which God has affixed to the violation of his law, and which he has declared shall overtake the transgressor, unless an adequate atonement be provided. By such an atonement is intended one that will sustain the authority of law, and "magnify and make it honourable," in the view of an intelligent and moral universe; or in other words, one that will answer the same end as the infliction upon the guilty, of the penalty threatened. An atonement of this character the *sinner* cannot make. His repentance alone will not suffice; for 'that has no efficacy to sustain law, and to deter others from the commission of iniquity. A government that should proclaim its law demanding perfect obedience, *with repentance merely*, affixed as the penalty of transgression, would betray a weakness sufficient to excite, and justly too, the contempt and derision of its subjects. Indeed, it would come but little short of inviting them to rebellion. The *human* government that should do this, woud not be tolerated; for it would virtually say to the thief, the murderer, and to every villain, "If you violate the law you shall—repent." But where is the criminal that would not pour out floods of penitential tears, if, on terms so easy, he could escape the prison and the gallows? And who would be deterred from the perpetration of crime by simply witnessing the repentance of another, or by the assurance that he must experience the same, if found guilty?

Now, as the principles of justice, not to say common sense, are everywhere the same, what has been stated as true of human government, must, in a higher and stricter sense, be true of the divine government. That, certainly, is not less perfect than the human in its structure and mode of administration.

Moreover, while the transgressor cannot make an adequate atonement by his repentance alone, he cannot do so by future obedience, or by works of supererogation. Such works are, in the nature of the case, impossible. No one can do more than the law requires at a given time, so that what is thus done may be set against past deficiencies. For the law demands, from the first moment of his accountable existence, the very last amount of service which his powers are capable of rendering. Its ever present demand is, "All thy heart." This is the utmost that a perfect being can render; and this actually rendered through a future existence, can only meet the demands of law, and therefore has nothing in it by which to compensate for past delinquencies. Besides, it is not the past alone that needs an atonement. The same is required for the repeated transgressions, and the continued imperfections, of the best efforts, that mark every step of a course through this world, and stand forth to view as the sad monuments of human weakness, and the necessity of God's gracious assistance. In confirmation of this view of the subject, we have the express declaration of the Scriptures, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Yet the sinner is not left, in this, his utmost extremity, to perish without an effort made in his behalf. Exposed to the fearful penality of the violated law, and without the means of deliverance within himself, the grace of God interposes and proclaims in his ears the glad tidings,—"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Not only in these general terms, is it made known to the transgressor that salvation is by the grace of God through his Son; but, more specifically, that it is through the *death* of that Son whose blood was shed as an atoning sacrifice for sin. That Son himself declared that he came to give his life a ransom for many, and that his blood would be shed for many, for the remission of sins. The great Apostle taught, not only that Christ came to instruct and to furnish a perfect example, but that "he *died* for our sins, according to the Scriptures." And in "the new song" heard by another apostle amid the visions of Patmos, the heavenly choir sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

Thus the guilty soul is pointed to the *death* of Christ as the means, and the only effectual means of his salvation, and as furnished by the grace of God. This is true without reference to the number of his sins. It avails nothing to plead that they are few and trivial. Could it ever be shown that the doctrine, so often questioned and spurned, if man's total alienation from God, "by wicked works," is utterly without foundation in Scripture of human experience, still the admission of *any* guilt, of one act of rebellion, one step in company with the rebellious, and within the domains of sin, places the soul forever beyond the possibility of salvation by the deeds of the law, and creates the necessity for the provisions of Christ's atonement.

Were the sinners, therefore, to need and to receive no further aid, but *of himself alone* exercising repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his salvation would be by grace; and he would have occasion to join with those who sing. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Yet were God to cease his gracious interpositions at this stage in the work of redemption, the guilty soul would still be lost. The atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer may, indeed, open the way for the removal of the *legal* barrier to his admission into heaven, but another and of a *moral* nature yet remains. It is not enough that the burden of his guilt may be borne away by another and a more powerful arm than his own; it is not enough that the purchased inheritance is placed full before him, and that he is invited and urged with the most earnest entreaty to its acceptance; the sinner must have with himself a moral fitness, and a disposition to enter upon its possession and enjoyment. We are thus brought to consider.

III. *The aids of the Holy Spirit.*

These must be imparted to the sinner before he will arise to a new and a spiritual life; and they must be imparted that he may be upheld and guided in all the duties and circumstances of that life.

1. *He must be born of the Spirit.*

On the necessity of a change in the purposes and affections, or, in other words, the heart of the sinner, before he can be admitted into the kingdom of Heaven, the Scriptures are clear and emphatic. This is evident from numerous declarations like the following: "Ye must be born again;" "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The change required is set forth under various figures, and in various forms of expression, as "a new birth," "a new creation," "a resurrection from the dead," the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new," and "the passing away of old things, and all things becoming new." The Scriptures teach that the necessity of this change is based on the general and total apostacy of the human race from God. The fact of such an apostacy they clearly establish in these and similar declarations;—"All have sinned;" "All have gone out of the way;" "There is none that doeth good, no not one;" "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

While insisting, however, on the necessity of the change in question, before the sinner can be admitted into Heaven, the Scriptures assure him that it is demanded by his own best interests as well as by the requirement of God; because such is the nature of Heaven, that, admitted there without this change, he would find it, *for him*, no place of happiness.

That the requirement of such a change is reasonable, cannot fail to be apparent upon a moment's reflection. Who is not conscious that no king could consistently bestow upon his revolted and rebellious subjects his favour and the privileges of his kingdom, until a change had taken place in their feelings towards him, and they had returned to their allegiance? And who does not know that to be perfectly happy, he must have feelings in unison with the place, the employments and the companionship about him? Marvel not, then, that "ye must be born again!"

But the point more especially to be insisted on in this connection is, that this change must be produced by the agency, of the Holy spirit. The necessity of this agency, the Scriptures clearly exhibit. They affirm that, "Except a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This necessity of the Spirit's agency they also teach as resting on the moral certainty that sinful men *will not* exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ," by their own unaided efforts. They represent men as the *voluntary* "servants of iniquity unto iniquity," as fast bound in the chains which their own hands have wrought, and will not unloose. The Scriptures abound in evidence that although the Son of God has done so much; although he became a servant that the guilty, the bondmen of sin, might "reign kings and priests unto God," and suffered and died to atone for their sins; although he calls from amid the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary,—"Look unto me and be ye saved;—I am the way—whosoever will, let him come, and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out;" and although he throws open wide the gates of the celestial city, and points to the "many mansions," and to "the Marriage Supper of the Lamb," and bids them, "Come, for all things are now ready," they all, with one consent, make excuse, and will not come. And onward they rush in the "broad way" to ruin, while the heavens are gathering blackness, and seem ready to pour the billows of wrath, and thunder indignation along their endless course! And the Christian minister might well give back his comission, in despair of success, did he not see painted, as a bow of hope, on those heavens, the "Purpose" of God to renew, and sanctify, and save by the influence of his Spirit as many of the perishing as can be thus saved, consistently with the best interests of his moral kingdom. For there is not the slightest evidence in the Scriptures, or in the history of the church, or in that of individual Christians, to warrant the conclusion that a single sinner ever became, or even would become, a "penitent believer," by all the arts of moral suasion, by all the efforts of human wisdom, without the aid and influences of the Holy Spirit. In vain, without these, may a Paul plant, and an Apollos water. But the opposite conclusion is established, not only by those passages already cited to prove the necessity of the Spirit's influence, but by those addressed to Christians, and those descriptive of their character, as persons "born of the Spirit;" and, also, by the uniform and united testimony borne to this very point, by those whose lives correspond, in any good degree to the Scriptural standard of Christian character. They declare that, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." The language of each is,

"Grace taught my roving feet
To tread the heavenly road;"

and, with an emphasis, he exclaims, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

But the salvation of the sinner is not secured even with this measure of grace. For,

2. *He must receive the upholding and guiding influence of the Spirit through life.*

Though sought by grace when an alien and a warderer from God justified in Christ for past guilt, and set as a pilgrim on his way Zionward, the believer, left to his own strength in the moral wilderness through which he is to pass, and exposed to the dangers that meet him at every step, would never reach the "Promised Land," and the city of the living God. Evidence of this is furnished by the Scriptures, and by Christian experience. In the former, Christians are represented, not only as those "whose path shineth more and more to the perfect day," and who will be finally victorious over sin, but as those who are liable to fall and perish, and who will at last "come off conquerors only through the upholding and guiding influences of the Holy Spirit. They are addressed as those "who are kept by the *power of God* through faith unto salvation." They are spoken of as those who are led by the Spirit; "For as many as (implying that all others are not) are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God." They are exhorted, also, to walk in the Spirit,—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." The experience of Christians, in all ages, has taught them their dependence upon the Spirit. The prayer of every devout heart has been, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me; uphold me with thy free Spirit." Indeed, not to dwell at length upon this point, it may be safely affirmed that none who read attentively the Word of God, can fail to see that,

"Saints by the power of God are kept
Till his salvation come."

In this discourse, the aim has not been so much to establish, by full and formal proof, the several points considered, as, assuming, to some extent at least, their truth as individual propositions, to show that in their combination, they constitute a scheme of salvation that has grace in its conception, grace in every step of its execution and grace in its consummation. And by *grace*, is intended more than mere goodness. Grace is unmerited favor, and differs from goodness, inasmuch as it always implies guilt in its recipient. Goodness gave man existence, and placed him amid all things pronounced by their Maker "very good." Grace first appeared when man was spared a moment after his first transgression. It was as the dawning of a day of hope upon a fallen and benighted world. When the "Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in his wings," that dawn increased to perfect day. When the Holy Spirit was given that this Sun might not rise in vain, that day of hope brightened into eternal radiance.

In conclusion, and in connection with the subject to which attention has been directed, we are naturally led to remark in respect to the glory which the scheme of salvation by grace is so eminently fitted to reflect upon the character of its Divine Author: and in respect to the gratitude and praise which He should and will receive from the redeemed,

1. *The glory which it reflects upon its Author.*

The glory of God is manifest in all his works, and in every aspect of his character of which the mind can form a conception. We conceive of him as a Being who, not only "weigheth the mountains in a balance, and taketh up the isles as a very little thing." and who created from nothing the world on which we dwell, and all things therein, but as the Being who spake the word, and there sprung into existence that vast assemblage of resplendent globes seen, by the telescope, to be similar to the Sun in size and glory. and "accompanied doubtless by their retinue of satellites, stretching far into the trackless regions of immortality, and in the conception of whose number and magnitude the imagination is overpowered and bewildered."

In the conception of God as creating and upholding those countless worlds, and rolling them in their appointed orbits through the illimitable tracts of space, we are filled with astonishment and awe, and are led to exclaim, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!" Thou art glorious in *power!*

We conceive of God as giving existence to myriads of intelligent and moral beings, "made in his own image," and fitted to experience emotions of delight from the contemplation of his works, and from intercourse with each other, and to share with him the exalted pleasures of a spiritual and eternal abode. Conceiving of him in this character we feel that he is glorious in *Goodness!*

In the conception of God as a being of spotless purity, looking upon sin only with the utmost abhorrence, turning with loathing from those who persist in their guilt and pollution, and bidding them depart "to their own place," he appears glorious in *justice and holiness.* But it is only when seen in the great plan of redemption that his character appears in its full glory. In that we see the combination of all his attributes, natural and moral. And it is in just such a plan of salvation as we have been considering, that God appears in the highest degree glorious. Merely to save from merited suffering, does not of itself confer glory. It may be a dishonorable weakness and interference with the claims and proper ends of justice and good government. Thus God might have melted into tenderness over the guilty, and by mere power taken them "universally," in all their pollution, without repentance, and without an atonement, to his bosom. But this would have been at the sacrifice of his justice, and his holiness. It would have been a wrong done to the obedient; it would have been *unjust* towards them, though merciful to the guilty; and it would have manifested a weakness of character, and a "partiality" deserving the contempt of the moral universe. Nothing like this appears in the "way of salvation," which has been the subject of contemplation in these pages. In that, justice and mercy operate to their fullest extent, while the one infringes not upon the other. There, "Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other." There, is seen a *Wisdom* which could conceive a plan of salvation in which the rays of the purest holiness, the most inflexible justice, and the tenderest love and compassion, meet and blend in a halo of glory around the Cross! There, too, is seen an *Omnipotence* that can carry into execution the full conception of that wisdom; and, by influences moral, yet mighty unto their purpose, bring it to a triumphant consummation.

Finally, "Salvation by grace," will furnish to the redeemed in Heaven, occasion for the liveliest gratitude, and the most exalted praise towards its Author.

Who, indeed but one redeemed by grace, can exercise gratitude, and join in the praise to the "Lamb of God," which the Bible assures us will constitute so much of the happiness of Heaven? Who else, from this world, will find Heaven a desirable residence? For who else, according to Scripture representations, will find the employments and the companionship of Heaven in unison with his own feelings? Imagine a soul in Heaven who has passed through this world wrapped in the mantle of his own righteousness, satisfied with the mere external proprieties of life, and scorning the doctrines of a "depraved, and a renewed heart, and atoning blood." All is glorious around him; and his first thought may be that of self-gratulation upon having reached Heaven without the humiliation of being "born of the Spirit," and clothed in another's righteousness,—and that other the man of Nazareth! He hears the swelling notes of the "New Song,' breaking forth from the great company who have been saved by grace, saying, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion forever." Yet to whom shall he sing? To whom shall he be grateful? He is indebted to no one; he has reached Heaven by his own works; his gratitude and his praise, therefore, must centre upon himself. The music of the heavenly choir can touch no kindred chord in his soul. While other hearts kindle with gratitude, and other lips utter praise; and while all seem drawn by an invisible influence towards a common centre of attraction, his heart is cold, and feels a repulsive influence, his lips are silent, and he learns that a change of place alone can bring no joy to a "carnal mind," an unrenewed heart. In a heaven of souls redeemed by grace, he is solitary, and a stranger; and voluntarily, he turns to hide "in outer darkness" his inglorious head. But to souls renewed and saved through atoning blood, Heaven will be "Home," for God the Father, and Christ the elder brother, will be there to welcome the Prodigal reclaimed, the "son that was lost and is found." Gratitude will there live through eternal ages, with undiminished fervour, and praise will be uttered by lips never to be weary. The great multitude of the redeemed, remembering that they were once depraved and guilty, helpless, and lost, will break forth into hosannas to the grace of God that made them what they are, and placed them where they are, amid Heaven's unending glories.

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SERMON DCXX.

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THE SIN OF CONSULTING WITH FAMILIAR SPIRITS.

"A man also, or a woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death. They shall stone them with stones; their blood shall be upon them."—Lev. xx. 27.

THE man or woman having a familiar spirit is, in other Scriptures called a *wizard*, a *witch*, a *necromancer*, a *sorcerer*. Each of these classes of persons professed to have intercourse with spirits, either with demons, or the dead, and by their means to make supernatural disclosures, and perform other unaccountable things. Each and all of them are condemned in the severest manner, in the Mosaic law. In the text it is said: "A man also, or a woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death. They shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." In another passage it is said: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." In still another, Moses says: "There shall not be found among you an enchanter, or a witch, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a necromancer; for all such are an abomination unto the Lord."

In accounting for the severity with which Moses denounced these characters and their works, it should be borne in mind that they were *heathen* works. The Canaanites, into whose land the children of Israel were about to come, and the Egyptians, from whose land they had just escaped,* were both greatly defiled with them. Indeed, then as now, the whole heathen world in ancient times was full of such practices. They were pre-eminently heathen in their origin and character, and God would not suffer his own people to be degraded and corrupted with them. They had been instrumental, with other things, in corrupting the heathen, and God knew that, if permitted, they would have the same effect upon the children of Israel; and he would not suffer the dealer with familiar spirits, or the witch, to live.

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* See Is. xix. 3.

The mode of proceeding against the witch, however, according to the statutes of Moses, has been often mistaken. There is no evidence that any of those absurd tests of witchcraft, which were so common in this country, and in Europe two hundred years ago, were ever resorted to in Israel. But the fact to be inquired into, with respect to the person accused, was her own *pretensions*. Does she pretend to be a witch? Does she claim to have intercourse with familiar spirits? If so, she is guilty, according to the law of Moses. If not, she is not guilty. Now there was some sense in a trial such as this. Here is no plunging the poor creature into water to see whether she will sink or swim. Here is no searching of her naked body, to see if there are witch-marks upon it. But the fact to be proved is the culprit's own pretensions; a fact which could be substantiated by testimony, as well as any other fact.

Not only was the witch a criminal, according to the Mosaic law, but all who resorted to her, or consulted with her, were in the same condemnation. "Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards to be defiled with them." "The soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards to go whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut them off from among his people."

The historical parts of the Old Testament furnish a commentary upon these statutes of Moses, and go still farther to show the character of the proceedings in question. Among the good things which Josiah accomplished for his people is specially mentioned his putting away all "the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land," 2 Kings xxiii. 24. Among the evil things charged upon Manasseh, was, that "he observed times and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards," 2 Kings xxi. 6. The crowning act of Saul's wickedness, for which he was finally rejected and cut off, was his "asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it," instead of enquiring of the Lord. "Therefore the Lord slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David, the Son of Jesse," 1 Chron. x. 13.

Nor do these practices find any more favor in the New Testament than in the old. Philip found one Simon, a magician, at Samaria, which before time had used sorceries, and bewitched the people, giving out that himself was some great one." But inspiration testifies that he was a deceiver and hypocrite, "In the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 9–23. Paul found another, a sorcerer, at Paphos, whom he addressed and characterized as follows: "O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord," Acts xiii. 6–11. The effect of a revival of religion at Ephesus was, that "many of these characters confessed, and showed their deeds, and brought their books together, and burned them; and they counted the price of the books that were burned, and found it to be fifty thousand pieces of silver," Acts xix. 18–20. John places sorcerers in the same class with "murderers, whoremongers, and idolators," and dooms them together to "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8.

But it is time that we enquire as to the *pretensions* of the characters of whom we have spoken. What are we to think of them? What judgment are we to form respecting them? Did they really have commerce with spirits, as they pretended? Or was it all a trick, a delusion?

However these questions may be answered, it makes but little difference as to the *guilt* of the persons implicated. If their strange proceedings were all a trick, they were guilty men. They were deceivers and impostors. Or if they really had, as they pretended, intercourse with spirits, they were none the less guilty. For such intercourse had been expressly forbidden by God, as a dangerous, heathenish, corrupting practice. So that whatever opinion we may form respecting the *claims* of those who professed to have commerce with spirits in ancient times, we are bound to regard them as guilty men—rebels against the law and the government of God.

But to come more directly to the question: There can be no doubt that many of the strange perfomances of the witches and wizards of olden time were a mere *pretence*. They were an imposition and a cheat, and were known to be such by those who practised them. They were brought about by some sleight of hand, or in some secret way, which the performers understood, but of which others were ignorant. This was true of the *magicians* generally. They had magical books which revealed their secret arts, and which constituted their principal study. The books which were burned at Ephesus were undoubtedly of this character; and those who "confessed and showed their deed," laid open the tricks and artifices which they had been wont to practice. Of this character, in all probability, were the magicians of Egypt. They are said to have done certain things by their *enchantments;* which is equivalent to saying that they did not really do them at all, but only *seemed* to do them, imposing upon the eyes of people by some sleight of hand.—Ex. vii. 11.

Among the arts practised by the ancient jugglers was *ventriloquism*—an imitation of the voices of animals, and the making of sounds which seemed to come from some other place. Thus they are said by Isaiah to "mutter and to peep," to "speak out of the ground," and to "whisper out of the dust," Is. viii 19; xxix. 4. A more perfect description of ventriloquism could hardly have been given.

But all the performances of the ancient witches and necromancers may not have been of this description. Some things may have been as unaccountable to them, as to those who witnessed them; and may have been regarded by both as of a supernatural character. And yet there may have been nothing supernatural in the case. There is a propensity in us all to regard everything new and unaccountable as supernatural. If we can account for an appearance in no other way, we refer it to the spirits, and let it go. But is this reasonable? Is it philosophical? How do we know it is the work of spirits? Have we investigated all the secrets of nature, and are we sure that the unaccountable phenomenon may not be the result of some hitherto undiscovered natural cause?

I have not a doubt that many things which the ancients attributed to their gods and demons *were* produced by unknown natural causes. In those days, natural science was but little understood. Of some of the more powerful physical agents, such as electricity, galvanism, magnetism, and the chemical gases, they were wholly ignorant. Many things which are now constantly performed through the agency of these forces, would by them have been accounted miraculous. Nor is it at all unlikely that some of the things which they *did* perform, and which they believed to have come from the other world, were produced by agencies such as these. Thus the Greeks ascribed thunder and lightning to the anger of Jupiter, hurling about his bolts from the top of Olympus. The ravings of the Pythoness, too, which were produced, undoubtedly, by the administration of drugs, or the inhaling of gases, they ascribed to the inspiration of Apollo.

But some may be inclined to look further than this, and attribute a portion, at least, of the strange performances of the ancient witches to the influence of spirits. And I see no reason for demurring to such a conclusion. It accords with the more obvious representations of Scripture, and, for aught we know to the contrary, may have been true. But if anything of the kind be true, this is true: that the spirits with whom the ancient witches and wizards had intercourse were *evil* spirits—*infernal* spirits—spirits not from heaven, or earth, but from hell. So much the Bible, in its more obvious meaning, teaches; and I know not that there is anything unreasonable or incredible, in the supposition. We believe that there are infernal spirits, the devil and his angels. We believe that they are immensely numerous; and that, with a view to our *trial* while on probation here, they are permitted to mingle with us, and to have access to our minds. They are represented as "going up and down in the earth, and walking to and fro in it," exerting all their influence for the ruin of mankind. Such being the case, if persons will seek commerce with these malicious beings, and give themselves up to it, *God may, in just judgment, give them up.* He may permit the devils to have intercourse with them, and to exhibit appearances, and make disclosures, which could have been made in no other way. I do not say positively that this has ever been the case; but such certainly is the more obvious representation of Scripture, and, as before remarked, I see nothing unreasonable or incredible in the supposition.

I have thus given my opinion, in few words, as to the case of those in ancient times, who professed to have intercourse with familiar spirits. A portion of their doings was, undoubtedly, a mere trick, a sleight of hand, a known and wicked deception. Another portion was the result of undiscovered natural causes. While another portion may have been wrought through the agency of evil spirits, voluntarily solicited in the first instance, to whom God may, in just judgment, have given up those, who were ready and willing to give up themselves.

The case of those spoken of in the Bible, who professed to have intercourse with spirits, goes to illustrate a class of cases which have occurred, at intervals, in all periods since, and even in our own times. There have been those among us and around us, all over the country, who professed to be mediums of intercourse between this world and the next; who professed to have intercourse with the spirits of the dead, and through them to make disclosures to the living, The class of persons of whom I speak are not a new thing in the earth. They have been long here. We trace them back to the earliest ages. We find them among both heathens and Jews. Iamblichus gives us the following account of mediums in his day: "Some are agitated throughout the whole body; others in some of their members; others again are entirely quiet. Sometimes there are pleasing harmonies, dances, and according voices; and sometimes the reverse of this. Again, the body appears taller or larger than nature, or is borne aloft through the air, or is affected by the opposite of these."*

De Mysteries, Sec iii. Cap. 5.

The class of persons here spoken of, like those referred to by Moses in the text, seem to me to be very similar—I know not but *precisely similar*—to the mediums of our own times. Both profess to have commerce with spirits—to have "*familiar* spirits"—and by means of them to make supernatural disclosures; and the remarks which *have been made respecting the former class*, are strictly applicable to the latter.

I have said that the feats of the ancient jugglers were many of them mere arts of deception. They were known to be such by those who performed them. And the same is true of many who practise the like things now. Their rappings, and writings, and trances, and other strange performances, are secretly, artfully got up by themselves. I do not say that this is true in all cases, but we know it is so in some, because the matter has been fully investigated, and public confession has been made. For example: A young woman who had been instructed by the Rochester rappers, and practised with them for a time, afterwards renounced the art, and exposed the delusion to the world. "All who saw her, and heard her," says my informant, "were entirely satisfied of the truth of her statements, and that she had revealed the actual method in which the deception was affected, and the deluded were blinded." Another young woman in Providence, Almira Beazely, who was noted for her rappings and revelations, and who murdered her brother to accomplish one of her own predictions, confessed, on her trial, that she made the noises herself, and explained the manner in which they were produced. She also confessed to the removing of certain articles which had mysteriously disappeared, and which she had pretended were taken away by spirits. Mr. B——, another rapping medium, testifies as follows: "All the time that I was in the business," about three months, "I produced the sounds voluntarily with my toes and shoes, and by other tricks of art. My answers to mental questions, in which I was considered very successful, were the result of close watching of the person's countenance, and a careful noting of hints inadvertently given. I also declare, that I have seen Mrs. P——," another medium, produce the sounds with her feet; also, while Mrs. P——'s foot was braced against one side of the table, I was able the better to lift it by acting upon the other side: and several times, both in the light and in the dark circles, I lifted and otherwise moved the table in this manner. I went into this business, to see if I could not myself do all that was claimed for the spirits; and when I had produced all the phenomena, I gave it up, and exposed it."

The mysterious rappings, it now appears, are made in various ways—by the toes, and shoes, and knees, and other joints of the body; also by machinery concealed within the rapping tables. A manufacturer of tables in New York, has testified that he made two "medium tables" in one year, in both of which was machinery concealed for producing raps, at the will of the operator. He said he was "willing to make twenty more, if he can be paid for it; and if people will give a dollar a head to hear a little hammer strike inside a table, and then run crazy about it, it is not his fault."

In the little book published by the Messrs. Burr, entitled "Knocks for the Knocking," these gentlemen say: "You will here find the history of the unmistakable detection and exposure of *more than fifty of the pretended spiritual mediums*. In every instance, where close examination has been permitted, fraud has been detected in producing the noise, and moving the tables. The mediums whom we have detected, were those to whom the rappers took us, for the purpose of convincing us, and w what they regarded as *the best* and *strongest*. We can now prod mysterious rappings in seventeen different ways; which tricks we h learned by the detection of so many mediums."

I might produce much more evidence of trick and imposture in th mysterious performances; but this is enough. I do not say, with som that they are *all* trick, and nothing else; but I do say that this is the c with many of them. They are a vile imposition, palmed off upon a wo dering, credulous community, for the sake of money, or for other sini and selfish ends.

If there is anything more than trick in what are called the spirit manifestations,—and I am inclined to think that in some instances th may be,—I should refer it, as in the case of the ancient wizards, to influence of *occult natural causes*; perhaps, electricity or animal magneti or something else, operating upon a nervous system of peculiar sensibili I incline to this opinion, for several reasons.

In the first place, if the answers came from the spirits, they ought be in character as such. Departed spirits might be expected to know least as much as they did while here on the earth. Whereas they mani often the grossest ignorance, and make some of the most awkward blund Such men as Roger Sherman, and Alexander Hamilton, and Cotton Mat for example, while writing from the other world, do not know how spell their own names. I have seen what purports to be a letter from G Washington, in which not half the words are spelled correctly; and sense is even more ridiculous than the spelling.

Andrew Jackson Davis, when in the spirit, speaks of Hugh Miller clergyman. An old bachelor of sixty was told by a mediun in Pro dence, that he had been twice married, and was the father of seven childr Le Roy Sunderland received a letter from Phebe Newell, making inqui respecting the state of her daughter, Mary Ellen Perkins, in the ot world. Mr. S. returned a very comforting answer, assuring the g Mrs. Newell that her Mary was happy, and exhorting her not to gri on her account, and yet the letter was all a hoax. There were no s persons as Phebe Newell or Mary Ellen Perkins in existence, and ne had been. In many instances, mediums have communicated with spirits of living persons, and got answers from them, supposing them be dead.

Again: if the disclosures which are made are really from the spiri they ought to be consistent with themselves. Whereas it is well kno that they vary endlessly. In numerous instances, they are directly s contradictory. "Some of the communications," says one who had b himself a medium, "were orthodox, others were infidel. Some wo acknowledge the truth of the Bible, others would condemn it. So would be in favor of virtue; others would encourage the grossest crime

Another gentleman, who had been a noted medium, but whose eyes we beginning to be opened as to the character of the proceedings, told company to which he had been lecturing one evening, "Now let any o present ask a series of questions, and I pledge myself that the answ shall every time be, yes. So one of the company asked, Is John Thom son alive? The answer was, yes. Is John Thompson dead? Yes. Do John Thompson live in Vermont? Yes. Does he live in Massachusett Yes. And so the spirits went on, contradicting themselves times witho number." After this, alike series of questions were answered in negative, exhibiting the most glaring contradictions, just as the operator pleased.

But this brings me to another reason for supposing that the answers are not from the spirits, but rather *from the mind of the operator*, or *from some other mind in communication with his*, under the influence of an electrical or magnetic cause. It is an admitted fact, these answers coincide generally with the opinions and wishes of the medium, or of some one present in consultation with him. For example, the spirit of John Wesley, speaking through a Universalist medium, regrets the errors which he had propagated in this world, and says, "If I could return to earth in a corporeal form, I should teach quite another doctrine." But the same spirit, speaking through a Methodist medium, utters very different language. "My views on Christian theology, which I taught in my ministry, and are set forth in my published works, are in all essential points the same that I now have, only my present views are much enlarged."

I know a respectable man who accidentally discovered that he was a medium, and practised a variety of experiments upon himself. Upon being asked what he thought of them, he replied, "If the answers are from the spirits, they must be very silly spirits, for they always answer just as I wish to have them, *i. e.*, if I have any wish about it." Another medium informs us that he can produce any answer he pleases, by only fixing his mind strongly upon it at the time. Now does this look as though the answers came from the spirit-world? If the spirits of the dead spoke, they would be likely to speak out independently,—to speak what *they* thought, and not what those thought with whom they were conversing.

There is another circumstance to be noted here. When the requisite preparation is made, there is no need of consulting the spirits at all, in order to secure answers. You may converse with the chairs or the table as well. This experiment was tried at W——, Vt. A Mr. K—— was the medium, and he had succeeded in conversing with the spirits, to the satisfaction of all concerned. At length he remarked, that he was about to let the company into an important secret. "We will interrogate the table," says he, "and have nothing more to do with the spirits." He did so, and the table talked and answered just as the spirits had done before. At the same time, the table, at his bidding, was made to stand on one leg, and to move about, as is usual in such cases.

On the point now under consideration, viz., the *magnetic* or *electric* character of some of these manifestations, I am happy to introduce the testimony of Dr. Samuel Taylor, a highly respectable physician of Petersham, Mass., whose article on the subject may be found in a late number of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal. Dr. Taylor was a writing medium, and his experiments were all made with the pen. On proposing mentally, some question to the spirits, his pen would begin to oscillate in his fingers, and very soon would write out an answer, and this without any will of his own. He tried the experiment many times, and always with the same result. And what is particularly to be noticed is, the pen would always write an answer according to his own opinions and wishes. For example: Dr. Taylor inquired of one of the spirits about the different forms of religion. "I asked," says he, "Which was the best religion; at the same time fixing my mind sternly on the word *Protestant.* My hand immediately wrote *Protestant.* In the same manner, and by direction of the same spirit, my hand wrote successively, Methodist, Unitarian, and I believe one or two other." While in this state, Dr. T. says, "I felt a sensation like that of a light galvanic current passing through me. Sometimes it appeared to be a steady thrill, and sometimes it was intermittent, resembling slight shocks of electricity." After numerous experiments, Dr. T. comes to the conclusion that the strange appearances of which he was the subject, were not tricks of his own; neither did they come from the spirit-world, but were the result of what he calls "detached vitalized electricity." When this conclusion was formed in his own mind, it occurred to him that he would put it to the test of the spirits. Accordingly, he asked them, "Is this the work of the departed spirits? The answer was, no. Is this the work of the devil? Again the answer was, no. Is it the effect of *detached, vitalized electricity?* The answer, was, yes." So the spirits confirmed the conclusion to which the Doctor himself had come; as they did, in fact, all his conclusions.

Although Dr. T. rejects the idea that the answers which he received came from the other world, he adds: "*A belief that the writings are the work of spirits tend greatly to the perfection of the experiment*; since it better concentrates the mind on the subject; and excites the nervous system more strongly."

We have the testimony of another medium to the same point with that of Dr. Taylor. Mr. Benjamin F. Cooley, who had long been a believer and operator in the spiritual rappings, states that his mind is entirely changed. This change has been brought about in consequence of "a deep and earnest study of the nature, power and application of electricity, and of the susceptability of the mind to electrical or psychological changes." These things, he says, "will produce the same mysterious and startling phenomena which have been produced throughout the country, and attributed to the operation of departed spirits."

In the summer of 1839, two Greek girls from Smyrna arrived in France, and began to exhibit their powers for money. Placing themselves one at each end of a large table, a crackling, like that of the electric fluid spreading itself over gilt paper, began to be heard. The table would then begin to shake, and to move itself from the elder girl towards the younger. These girls lost their power when clad in silk, and also when the atmosphere was in a humid state; thus indicating that the appearances where of an electric character.

The mediums are often affected by the *magnet*, as well as by electricity. This was true of a French girl, Angelique Cottin, whose case was reported by the Paris Academy of Science, in 1846. She seems to have been a genuine and powerful medium, exhibiting all the phenomena of our most celebrated American mediums, at the present day. "The principle seat of her power," says Arago, "seems to be in her left side. During her paroxysms, this is warmer than the right side, and is affected with jerks, unusual movements, and a kind of trembling, which communicates itself to the hand which touches it. She presents, moreover, a peculiar sensibility to the action of the magnet. When she approaches the north pole of the magnet, she feels a violent shock, while the south pole produces no effect whatever."

The mysterious attractions and repulsions attending this poor girl are thus described in Arago's Report. "A sheet of paper, a pen, or any other light body being placed upon a table, if the girl approaches it with her left hand. even before she touches it, the object is driven away, as by a gust of wind. The table is overthrown. the moment it is touched by *her hand*, or even by a string which she may hold in her hand. This negative, exhibiting the most glaring contradictions, just as the operator pleased.

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I know a respectable man who accidentally discovered that he was a medium, and practised a variety of experiments upon himself. Upon being asked what he thought of them, he repiled, "If the answers are from the spirits, they must be very silly spirits, for they always answer just as I wish to have them, *i. e.*, if I have any wish about it." Another medium informs us that he can produce any answer he pleases, by only fixing his mind strongly upon it at the time. Now does this look as though the answers came from the spirit-world? If the spirits of the dead spoke, they would be likely to speak out independently,—to speak what *they* thought, and not what those thought with whom they were conversing.

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And now, if any are not satisfied with my explanations thus far, and still insist that the agency of spirits *is* concerned, I reply, as in the first part of my discourse, that if any spirits are concerned, they are, unquestionably, *infernal spirits*. It is not at all likely that good spirits have anything to do in the matter. Holy angels have nobler, better employment than this. And the spirits of the just made perfect, who have gone to their eternal rest, and are represented as dwelling in the New Jerusalem above, would never descend to be engaged in such paltry trifling here below. Indeed, it is expressly stated in the Scriptures, that those who depart out of this world at death, *do not return to it*. David, speaking of his deceased child, says: "I shall go to him, but *he shall not return to me*," 2 Sam. xii. 23. Job also says: "Let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence *I shall not return*." "When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence *I shall not return*," Job x. 21; xvi. 22.

Besides, the degraded character of many, not to say *most*, who act as mediums, and the childish, silly, self-contradictory, answers which are often given; the fact, too, that many of these answers are of an infidel and immoral tendency, in palpable contradiction to both conscience and the Bible; also the mischief which the alleged spirits often perpetrate, tearing clothes, destroying furniture, and driving weak-minded men and women to distraction and suicide;—these things show clearly enough what kind of spirits are concerned, if, indeed, *any* are. They must be *wicked* spirits. They are, undoubtedly, *infernal spirits*, who, for the *trial* of our race, are abroad in the earth, "going about, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour."

And if it be objected to this, that some of the answers are pious and good—good in themselves, and in their influence, I have only to reply, that Satan can be very pious, when it will best subserve his diabolical purposes. He can put on the appearance of an angel of light, thereby the more fatally to deceive.

According to the Scriptures, the "familiar spirits" of the ancient witches and wizards were *infernal spirits*—liars, deceivers, devils—against whose wiles and influence the people of God were solemnly warned And the spirits who have intercourse with certain persons now—if spirits they be—are undoubtedly of the same class. And I would by no means affirm that there can be no demoniacal agency here. If persons will seek after unlawful intercourse with the Evil One, and give themselves up to it, as I said before, *God may give them up*. He may permit the devil to communicate with them, and so lead them captive at his will.

The devils are always at hand, where there is mischief to be done; and they have knowledge enough to give all the answers, and make all the disclosures, which ever have been made, or will be. There is no necessity for calling in the agency of departed relatives and friends. There are other spirits who know more than they do, who are present, invisibly, in the world; and if any spirits are concerned in these transactions, it is undoubtedly the spirits of darkness. Such is the testimony of Scripture in the case, and the supposition is as reasonable as it is scriptural.

Having thus explained, as well as I am able, the character of the communications purporting to come from the other world, and shown how they are to be accounted for, I proceed to speak of the *evil* of them —the evil of making them, consulting them, or having aught to do with them.

That they are evil and sinful, the Scriptures most unequivocally teach. They are sternly forbidden, as I have already shown, in all parts of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New. And if any are disposed to ask, What is the harm of them? Wherein does the evil of them consist? The answer to these questions is suggested, in part, in what has been already said.

A considerable part of the work of those who profess to have commerce with the spirits, we have seen is an *imposture.* It is a work of deception; and deception is always evil. What right have I wittingly to *deceive* my fellow men, with regard to the concerns of the other world? What right have I to *pretend* to make disclosures to them from that world, which I know are fictitious and delusive? What right have I to take their time, and harrow up their feelings, and filch from them their money, in this way? For any one to do this is a gross sin. It is a shameful sin. I do not say that, under present circumstances, it is worthy of death, for I do not think it is; but I do say it is a *fraud* upon individuals and society—a sin worthy to be noticed and punished by the judges.

We have seen that a part of what is done by those who claim to have intercourse with spirits may be the result of *unknown natural causes.* This is the most plausible, excusable view which can possibly be taken of the matter; and yet, in this view, the practices in question are frightfully evil. They are so on more accounts than one. The persons who alone are susceptible to the influence of these natural causes are those of a diseased or delicate nervous temperament; and the effect of experimenting upon their nervous system is usually to shatter it the more. They become excitable, fanatical, visionary, and often insane. Diseases are engendered, both of body and mind, which lead on to the most fearful consequences.

A young clergyman of my acquaintance, having discovered that he was a medium, went into a course of experiments upon himself. He continued them until he became terrified, and was constrained to desist. He told me that if he had persisted a few weeks longer, he should have been either crazy or dead.

A man in B——, Mass., who had been much given to the rappings, and other spiritual manifestations, became, in consequence, a raving maniac, threatened the life of his family, and was committed to the lunatic asylum in Worcester. On the first day of January, 1851, there were ninety cases of insanity, in only eight of our public hospitals, all which had been induced by the rapping mania. It is believed that, a few months later, there were not less than five hundred such cases in the United States—a terrible result of one of the most pitiable, contemptible delusions, that ever visited this country.

But insanity is not the only evil of the practices in question, when viewed as the result of natural causes. For the truth is, that in nearly every case, they are *not* so viewed by those who engage in them. *They* regard them as the work of spirits. They are therefore *deceived;* and those who follow them are deceived. Both suppose that they are receiving utterances from the other world, when nothing is uttered but vain fantasies from their own minds and hearts. Now, a delusion such as this is manifestly a hurtful one. It is one full of danger to all concerned. To mistake our own fancies for Divine revelations, and feel conscience bound to obey them as such; why this is the very essence of fanaticism. It is fanaticism in its most frightful form. Under the influence of such an impression, persons may be led to perpertrate the greatest cruelties, and the most horrid crimes, and vainly think they are doing God service. I have read of "a lady of birth, taste, high connections, and literary accomplishments, who committed suicide, leaving written testimony of her being prompted thereto by revelations from the spiritual world." "Another young woman cut off her hand with a carving knife, thrust the bleeding stump into the fire, and then put out her eyes, declaring that she was directed to do so by the spirits." A Mr. S—— C——, of W—— Co., Ohio, under the influence of the rapping delusion," became possessed with the idea that he must like Abraham, offer a sacrifice to the Supreme Being. Accordingly, he cut of one of his feet. His family, fearing that some other of his limbs might fall a sacrifice, had him conveyed to the asylum at Columbus, where he was confined."

Such are some of the evils resulting from the practices we are considering, when viewed as the result of natural causes. And are they not frightful evils? Do they not call for the united efforts of all the friends of religion and humanity to remove them?

I need say but a few words to show the evil of these practices, on the *third* mode of accounting for them, viz., that they are produced by demoniacal agency. For who are those "familiar spirits," to whom, on the supposition, persons give themselves up, and to whom they are given up of God? They are the spirits of darkness, liars from the beginning, and the father of lies—the first and greatest enemies of the human race. And can it be otherwise than evil to have commerce with such beings; to receive and follow their suggestions; pleasing ourselves meanwhile with the thought that we are conversing with departed friends, or receiving, it may be, revelations from heaven? I can conceive of nothing more terrible than this—more perilous in all its influences, both upon the individual and society, upon the body and the soul. In a state of society like that in Israel, requiring that the penal code should be stringent and severe, I wonder not at all that these, and the like practices, should have been punished with the utmost rigor of the law.

I have said that the practices which have been considered are of heathen origin. They originated with the heathen; they were early spread over the greater part of the heathen world; and they continue to pervade and curse it to the present time. In various portions of heathendom, at this very day, scarcely an affliction occurs, a dearth, a flood, a fit of sickness, or an instance of death, but some poor creature, and often more than one, is accused and put to death as being the cause of it. The sick man, it is said, is bewitched. Who has bewitched him? His death, if he chance to die, has been brought about by evil spirits. Who has sent the spirits upon him? To answer these questions, some old hag or conjurer is consulted; the cause of the mischief is soon discovered; and an innocent person is put to death. Probably hundreds die every year after this manner among the heathen, even in this nineteenth century.

And the case would soon be no better among ourselves, if we were to go extensively and confidently into the practice of consulting with familiar spirits. For the spirits would unravel all mysteries; they would reveal all secrets; and not a man, or woman, or child would be safe from their malicious accusations. "An elderly gentleman in Indiana was living in peace and harmony with his family, until the spirit-rappers visited the neighbourhood. He attended their exhibitions, and believed their revelations. And it was revealed to him, among other things, that his second wife, with whom he was living, had caused the death of his former companion. From this moment his peace was fatally interrupted. He was living with a murderer. And if the community around him had been deluded like himself, the poor woman must have suffered.

Some years ago, the Lunatic Asylum in Maine took fire, and a portion of the inmates were smothered and consumed. And there are hundreds of persons among us, who affirm that the building was set on fire by the keepers. They *know* it was so; they have not a doubt of it; not because they have a particle of evidence to that effect from *this* world, but because the spirits have so informed them. Now let these utterances become common, and be commonly received; and how long would it be before these keepers, every one of them, would be dragged to the gallows, or the stake, while they were as innocent of the charge preferred against them as a child unborn.

I cite these instances just to show the sin, the evil, the exceeding *peril* of indulging in those practices which have been exposed. Let all who hear me, then, beware of them, and shun them. I feel solemnly called upon to lift a voice of warning on this subject. Let us "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." If any of us are capable of becoming what are called mediums, we had better not know it, or, if we know it, we had better refrain from all experiments. To tamper with such a power is to tamper with an already shattered nervous system, the only effect of which will be to shatter it the more. Or it is to tamper with infernal spirits,—to have communion with the Evil One.

Or, if any persons will consent so to abuse and degrade themselves as to act as mediums, let no one follow them. Let them have their marvels and their revelations all to themselves. "Their policy is to awaken curiosity, and then cry, *investigate;* and if you will only attend their sittings, at a dollar a visit, for the purpose of investigating, their end is accomplished. They have your money, and have your *example*, to induce others to go and do likewise."

They can tell you nothing which is of the least importance to you. They never have told you anything that was of any importance. I challenge all the workers with familiar spirits to show, that a single disclosure has ever been made, which was of the least importance to the world. They can tell us nothing which we have any reason or right to believe, at least on their testimony. And if any do believe them, and put confidence in them, they will surely be led astray.

The Bible has faithfully warned us on this subject, as on almost every other, where there is danger. "Regard not them which have familiar spirits, neither seek after them, to be defiled by them." "Give no heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

Indeed, the result of this whole discussion should be, to lead us to prize the Bible more, and give heed to it with the greater diligence and confidence. It *is* "a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path." It *is* "a light shining in a dark place." There is nothing more striking than the difference between the *Scripture* representations of the future world, which we know are true, and those which are given by the revealers of modern times. The former are solemn, weighty, exciting, impressive, some of them awfully, gloriously so. While the latter, as one says, are "so uniformly and monotonously silly, that we are compelled to think, if these are really the spirits of the dead, in dying they must have lost what little of common sense they ever possessed. If these are actual specimens of the spirit-world, then *this* world, however hard and imperfect, is altogether the most respectable part of God's creation."

In the Bible, there are frequent accounts of persons who were literally raised from the dead,—who actually returned from the spirit-world to this. But they returned, in every instance, with sealed lips. In no instance do we hear them making disclosures. But our modern revealers of things unseen pursue a very different course. They practise no reserve. They go into the minutest particulars,—sometimes into the most disgusting details, and publish, as one expresses it, "a penny magazine of the spiritual world."

The result of all our enquiries then should be, to bind us more closely to the Bible; to lead us to cling to it, and follow it as our sole and sufficient guide, in things pertaining to the future world. God has told us in his word all that we need know respecting that world. He has told us all that he intends we ever shall know, until we get there. He has told us enough to awaken the most lively interest, and the most earnest care. And what he has told us, we have on his own infallible authority. It is to be *depended on*. It is the word of him that cannot lie.

Let us, then, study his holy word. Let us believe it, love it, and live according to it. Let us diligently prepare for that world on which we are so soon to enter, and not be vainly trying to pry into its secrets, nor be running after those who can know no more of the subject than we do ourselves.

SERMON DCXXI.

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THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH IN THE PREACHER.

"And the dove came in to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth was an olive-leaf pluckt off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth."—GEN. viii. 11.

THE incident recorded in the text occurred while Noah was shut up in the ark, aground "upon the mountains of Ararat." To identify the Ararat has required considerable research. The location of it as now generally received, however, has been objected to on account of the distance of olive trees; none being found nearer than the province of Akhaltzikhi and the basin of the ancient Colchis, a hundred or more miles away. But tourists, who have mentioned this objection to the monks of Echmiadzin, have been met with the shrewd refutation, that it would not be very hard work for a pigeon to fly to Akhaltzikhi and back again in a day. And when compared with some recent experiments on the fleetness of carrier pigeons, the reply of the monks appears satisfactory.* "And the dove came in to him in the evening." The phrase *in the evening* is important as a beautiful though undesigned coincidence with geographical facts, and as a caution against being hasty in questioning the statements of "holy men—moved by the Holy Ghost." The mission of the dove was one of inquiry. Though mute, she was expected to give an intelligible report. She returned with an olive-leaf. On examining the stem, Noah perceived that it had been "pluckt of;" that is, taken, not afloat, but fresh from the tree. And by this "evidence of things not seen," he "knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." To faith was awarded the olive-leaf.

The text, if now rightly interpreted, proposes "for reproof," and "for instruction in righteousness," THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH IN THE PREACHER. In treating of this subject, it is proper to consider.

I. *The meaning of faith.*

Faith is of different kinds. There is a natural, and a supernatural or Christian faith. And it is possible to confound either kind with the other, and curiosity with both. Curiosity and faith have reference alike to something beyond our immediate beholding. But the object of faith is definite and clear, while that of curiosity is indefinite and vague. Curiosity is a longing after something without any knowledge of what it is to be. Faith is a grasping after something which though "not seen" is yet known. Curiosity is satisfied with the obtaining of any thing—no matter what. Faith is satisfied with nothing less than the definite object it seeks. Curiosity is a vane—veering "with every wind of doctrine." Faith is a needle—by which the voyagers of probation *nothing wavering* are guided "into their desired haven." Faith may be defined in general *inward sight*, or that which supplies the want of sight. What sight is to the body, faith is to the spirit. When our sight is bounded by the horizon, faith looks beyond; and we are none the less confident of the reality of the objects of our faith, than of that of the objects of our sight. When we have come to the first horizon, our faith has become sight to the second. Thus our faith becomes sight, and our sight follows our faith, till our sight can no longer be bounded, and our faith is swallowed up in our immediate beholding. And thus, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

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* Bib. Rep. ii. 204; vii. 395.

Natural faith is comprehended entirely within the sphere of natural objects. In one sense all men live by this kind of faith. One need only reflect upon the power of motion in the body, and the connection of that power with the will, to be convinced of his dependence upon natural faith in even *walking by sight*. Men sow and gather and eat by natural faith. It is by this faith that we engage in the various pursuits of the world. And it varies in degree according to the dangers and difficulties with which our enterprises are beset.

But Christian faith is concerned with spiritual things; those heavenly and divine "things not seen as yet." This kind of faith is possessed only by such as have been born of the Spirit. This is that faith by which a man is "justified from all things." It is this supernatural faith by which a man is united to Christ as a branch of the vine; by which a man prays and labors and contributes of his substance for the spiritual reformation of a wicked world; by which the missionary to foreign lands *casts his bread upon the waters*, and by which he *finds it* again *after many days*. This is so superior to natural faith, as by common consent to need no qualifying terms to distinguish it. Supernatural or Christian faith is *the* faith treated of in the Scriptures. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac," notwithstanding the promise, *That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:* "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead," By faith, many a saint, now in heaven, has suffered the most cruel martyrdom. This supernatural faith is a spiritual eye by which its possessor discerns spiritual things; with which he looks through Revelation, as with the natural eye he looks through a telescope, and beholds the Star of Bethlehem, the Sun of Righteousness, eternity folded up and comprehended in time in the person of the Saviour. And this is the faith contemplated in the subject of this discourse.

II. *The conditions upon which faith may become triumphant.*

A triumph pre-supposes a conflict. Faith is antagonist to unbelief. If faith is "able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand," it is appropriately called triumphant. But unbelief presents itself in a variety of forms. Sometimes it presents itself simply as unbelief: and then it may be either the remnant of "sin dwelling in" the renewed heart, or the entire unbelief of the heart "dead in trespasses and sins." Sometimes it presents itself as cold indifference; and then faith, seeming to itself to *fight as beating the air*, often becomes disheartened, and "weary in well-doing." Unbelief may then arouse and advance towards faith in the form of doubt, to see if faith is in earnest. Again it presents itself with sword in sheath as if to surrender, a spy and a traitor. It may come again as temptation, offering faith large gain to surrender herself. But perhaps, unbelief is never so formidable as when it presents itself as persecution; armed with frowns and sneers, by-words and hisses, "cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover bonds and imprisonment," hunger, cold, and nakedness, racks stones, swords, and fire. Conquering the enemy in all these forms, faith "obtains a good report." But the conflict is without cessation, except when there is a victory on one side or the other. It commences in the believer's own heart; and when faith has become victorious there, it is assailed by a world of unbelief without. There is a triumph of faith within, therefore, before there can be any manifestation of faith without. But the conflict within is invisible; and the triumph of faith in that conflict is made manifest by it subsequent conflict with the world. This latter conflict alone attracts observation. In the conflict of faith with unbelief, the opposing forces are apparently unequal. Faith appears like an individual against a host. And because faith, single-handed, takes the field against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," the conflict has a peculiar interest.

Faith becomes truly and distinctly heroic only when it contends with difficulties which seem overpowering. And the grandeur of a triumph is in proportion to the greatness of the difficulties overcome. Generally the outward obstacles are not very great; consequently the triumphs of faith are usually small. The greater the progress of faith, the less remarkable is every succeeding step. As faith gains the ascendency, and moves onward, "conquering and to conquer," the enemy is reduced, and the din of the conflict is drowned in the notes of victory. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But it is only once in an age that we see a man triumphantly believing against time and persecution, improbabilities and apparent impossibilities, a light and an exemplar for the multitude—a true hero in the "fight of faith" And as faith is a light to the soul, it becomes most conspicuous in times of the greatest spiritual darkness. Not only is its brilliancy increased by the contrast, but its flame is expanded by the very efforts which are made to extinguish it. There might be such a prevalence of piety that the faith of the most devoted servant of God would be no more conspicuous than a candle lighted at noonday. And there have been times when from the scarcity of piety the faith of a single servant, even though he followed his Lord "afar off," has been like the Aurora Borealis at midnight. There seems to be a preparation in time as well as in men for the formation of eras in the history of the world. And heroes in sacred history, as well as in profane, are both the instruments and the productions of the revolutions which give them celebrity. It is natural to look for the conditions requisite to the most extraordinary triumphs in those who are possessed of faith in the highest degree. And for the highest degree of faith, it is natural to look to those whose special office is to recommend it to others. Unless faith is first triumphant in themselves, they can hardly expect it to be so in those upon whom they urge it. It were unnatural that soldiers should be courageous while their leaders are "fearful and faint-hearted." Of all heroism, that is the greatest which is called forth in defence of righteousness and truth. And all sacred heroism is emphatically the heroism of faith. Such was the heroism of those ancient worthies "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

III. *Some of the trials of faith peculiar to the preacher.*

The preacher of the gospel has most, if not all the trials of faith which are common to all Christians. He has also some trials of faith which are altogether peculiar to himself. And some trials of faith which are common to others are rendered peculiar to him by the greater intensity to which *his furnace is heated.* It is notorious that the preacher is often made *the subject of oppression*, for the very reason that he is a preacher. He is often slandered and otherwise maltreated for his very faithfulness to "rebuke with all authority." Not unfrequently, too, professing Christians even, to whom he ministers, will not suffer him to "live of the gospel" in the full sense of the scriptural provision; justifying themselves, however, on the ground, not that their love of the gospel is but little stronger than their love of money, but that a *liberal support* even, to say nothing of any justly due overplus, would greatly endanger his Christian humility, Accordingly it would not be surprising if, in some of his frequent emergencies, he should be strongly tempted to resign his high commission. And "the man that endureth temptation" may well be considered victorious over a trial of faith at a point where the flesh is peculiarly weak. Again, the inefficiency of the faith of Christ's professing followers for whom he "labors in word and doctrine," sometimes subjects the preacher's faith to a severe trial. It is sometimes difficult to reconcile their apparent zeal and fervency in ordinary duties with their "neglect of the weightier matters." The preacher is apt to distrust that faith which does not evidently "work by love." He witnesses many things which suggest the Scripture, "All men have not faith." His courage is diminished. He is prone to conclude that the gospel, as proclaimed by him, is *not* "the power of God unto salvation to *every* one that believeth."

The faith of the preacher is subjected to another trial from the obstinacy of the unbelief of the world around him. His mind is much employed with such themes as seem fitted to lead the unbelieving to Christ. His thoughts engross his affections. He prays God to make the word effectual. Here and there, perhaps, an unbeliever seems deeply moved. Perhaps a multitude are mentally exclaiming, "Almost thou persuadest." But they go from the sanctuary, and their serious impressions are lost in "the cares of this world;" while the preacher is hopefully and prayerfully preparing "a message from God unto" the awakened and alarmed. As the Sabbath returns he delivers his message; but with the same result as before. And the process may be repeated till his expectation is destroyed from its own intensity, and almost in despair he exclaims, "Who hath believed our report!" Then it is that to him the exhortation to "be not weary in well doing," is like the irony of Elijah to the prophets of Baal. Moreover, the faith of the preacher is often tried in view of the magnitude of his work, and the conscious weakness of the instrument. He is single-handed, and yet is required to preach the gospel to men who are at "enmity against God," and are ready to "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction." And he is required to preach so faithfully that their blood shall not be required at his hand. Knowing full well that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," and that the truth resisted always produces yet greater hardness of heart, and that all human wisdom and power are absolutely nothing in converting a soul, and yet that every one that *planteth* or *watereth* must approve himself "unto God a sweet savor of Christ" even though he be unto men "a savor of death unto death," it is not strange that the preacher should shrink from this weight of responsibleness, and cry out with the apostle, though without the apostle's faith, "Who is sufficient for these things?" But of all the trials of faith peculiar to the preacher, perhaps the severest of all is his continual remembrance that they *are* peculiar. He must endure them *alone*. His very office separates him from any adequate sympathy or assistance from other believers. As they have not his work to perform, they can know but little of his hopes of success, and fears of failure, and consequently also of the bitterness of his disappointments. Thus shut up in the circle of his own private and peculiar trials, and depressed with the consciousness that none human can enter for his relief, he may not be able to appreciate the wisdom of the providence, and at length find himself struggling for life against rising doubts of those "things not seen as yet." If in "moments of despondency, Shakspeare thought himself no poet, and Raphael no painter," why should it be thought affectation in the preacher sometimes to conclude, that he is "less than the least of all saints!"

IV. *The triumphs of faith as illustrated in the life and history of Noah.*

The conflicts and triumphs of faith in the preacher are substantially the same in every age. But it seems to be peculiarly appropriate that we should stimulate our faith by a careful study of the religious history of that "great cloud of witnesses" by whom "we are compassed about." Turning back to the early generations of our race we find a period when "all flesh had corrupted his way." The decendants of Seth had mingled with those of Cain, till "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth." In the midst of this deep moral night, a man burdened with the curse of sin was blessed with a son. A presentiment of the future celebrity of the child perhaps took possession of the father. And as a first preparation for the triumphs of faith in the hero of our subject, his consecration in infancy should not be forgotten. For Lamech named his son, "Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands because of the ground which the Lord had cursed." Notwithstanding the wickedness of the times, "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations." By nature he was no better than others; but he yielded to the *strivings of the Spirit*, and secured his presiding and protecting presence. The long suffering of God towards his disloyal creatures was great. He waited centuries in vain for any signs of repentance. And not until five hundred years after Noah was born did he threaten a judgment from heaven. The denunciation was terrible. Man was so degraded that he was to be whelmed in one common ruin with the beast, and the fowl, and the reptile. "*The end of all flesh is come before me*," was the language of the "grieved" Jehovah. But though wroth with the wicked, in mercy God remembers the faithful. Though there be but one in the universe, the Infinite Eye searches him out. Noah, like Enoch, has "walked with God." And the Spirit descends and communes with him as with a familiar friend. Noah is commanded to build an ark, not only for his own preservation, but for that of his family, and a pair of every species of flesh. For a flood is announced, in which all but such as take refuge in the ark shall be drowned. And notwithstanding it may never have rained heretofore, and the ground may never have been moistened except with a mist; and though the size of the ark be enormous, and the burden of the work be upon himself, Noah doubts not a moment, but undertakes forthwith what the Lord has commanded. But his faith has no sooner manifested itself in obedience than it attracts attention. "What means this collection of 'gopher wood?' What means this hewing of timber? What carpenter ever framed into a building such huge beams as these?" Amidst a thousand such exclamations from the surrounding inhabitants, Noah quietly proceeds with his task. His procedure excites their curiosity till they scrutinize and wonder in silence. Then, standing erect, the "preacher of righteousness" proclaims the strange tidings from heaven. He lays open the majestic but terrific conception of the destruction of the world by "a flood of waters;" the righteous alone being saved in "an ark." The people are confounded, but not convinced. Their surprise passes off, and they pronounce him the victim of profound superstition. Their curiosity changes into ridicule and contempt: the ark becomes a bye-word, and the builder a hiss. But with unshaken confidence Noah holds on his course, suffering all manner of derision and abuse from the looker-on, and the passer-by. Though a host of scoffing spectators are present, there is no interruption of the work. Slowly and surely, and with surprising exactness, the timbers are arranged and adjusted, and the vessel goes up, up, and still up, till the command, "With lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it," is completely fulfilled.

The stupendous structure has now become a temple in which the heroic builder worships as well as works. Its form, its position, and its hugeness, now presented to the spectator with their combined effect, seem to force the admission that the architectural design must be from heaven. The query arises in one and another, "Is not the old man in his right mind after all? How could he accomplish all this if he has not received a commission from on high?" Meantime, the "preacher of righteousness" ceases not to warn them "of things not seen as yet," and to exhort them to repentance and faith. Whether standing in the first story, or the second, or the third, or even on the roof, he watches every goer and comer, that he may "preach the word." "A little while, and he who threatened he would come, will come, and make no tarrying, and listen to no calls for mercy. And ye who will not be *blessed* in believing what ye have not seen, shall be *cursed* in seeing what ye would not believe." Year after year rolls away until scores are consumed, and yet Noah never forgets to "be instant in season, out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." And as a century of labor is drawing to a close, he urges reconciliation to God more particularly from the shortness of time. "A few more sounds of the hammer, and the ark will be builded. And when it shall have been coated "within and without with pitch," the sky which has hitherto been so mild and serene will soon assume a new aspect. "For the Lord hath spoken and he shall perform." At length the ark is completed. The difficulties of labor and expense, and the almost "intolerable unbelief and ridicule the undertaking encountered," have at last been overcome. Equally faithful has been Noah in the office of ship-carpenter, and in that of "a preacher of righteousness." Not a moment has he queried how the earth would be drowned. Not a moment has he doubted that a flood would come. And five score years has he toiled and preached, under the most trying circumstances, by that in the promise of God. And now, as he retires from his labor, and beholds his preparation for the deluge, it is only to reveal a still greater depth of faith, in waiting for the command from above to enter into the ark he has made. And again he lifts a warning to the world, "'Seven days,' and the Lord will appear with 'a flood of waters.' 'Seven days,' and ye who have mocked and derided, shall do so no more. Repent, and do works meet for repentance, or in 'seven days' 'He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have you in derision.'" But his preaching seems to answer no purpose, save that of exciting the people to still greater manifestations of contempt. And pointing perhaps to the neighboring Ararat they exclaim with all assurance of unbelief,

"Shall yon exalting peak,
Whose glittering top is like a distant star,
Lie low beneath the boiling of the deep?"

It was sad for the preacher of righteousness to be thus forced to conclude that he was "a savor of death unto death" to the whole world. Still he ceased not to "cry aloud, and show the people their transgression." The longer they persisted in their wickedness, the more earnest and eloquent grew the preacher; "and so much the more as he saw the day approaching!" Five days have already gone by, and the sixth is now passing, and the ark stands there complete, majestic, and alone,—the magnificent result of a faith which shall soon *remove mountains, and cast them into the sea.* And while the preacher of righteousness is paying his last visits to his relatives and friends, and everywhere uttering his last warnings and entreaties, the people on all sides are giving vent to their ridicule. "To-morrow, and the ark shall prove a monument of the blindest superstition." Alas! and it *shall* prove a monument of the blindest superstition; the superstition, not of faith, but of unbelief,— not of the preacher of righteousness, but of the world which he warned of destruction!

"Behold their last to-morrow!
Earth shall be ocean!
And no breath,
Save of the winds be on the unbounded wave!
Angels shall tire their wings, but find no spot:
Not even a rock from out the liquid grave
Shall lift its point to save."

But with their accustomed obstinacy and unbelief the people retire once more to their rest. The ark, which was designed from "the beginning," and commenced a century ago on the earth, has been finished. And the "seven days" respite foretold by the preacher is drawing to a close. And under the delusion that to-morrow Noah's faith will be shaken and destroyed, and their own unbelief be triumphant, they close their eyes in the sleep of nature, only next to close them forever in the sleep of death. Their dreams correspond to their previous reveries, and again they awake as they fell asleep, infatuated with unbelief. The morning seems the brightest and serenest they have ever beheld. The past six days have been holidays, spent in "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage." But the seventh is to be the great day of all. To-day the people of the land assemble to see and exult over the folly of Noah. They are becoming impatient to witness his disappointment and defeat. For unbelief itself has not been so confident of the soundness and safety of its course, but that the warnings of faith have wrought up an excitement the most intense. Every hour seems a day, and every minute an hour, when lo! perhaps as the sun is just crossing the meridian, a strange procession of man, and of beast, and of bird, and of creeping things is seen moving in the direction of the ark! Slowly, and orderly, and solemnly, and measuredly, it tramps out the death-knell of the wondering world. And as the preacher and his family, and the male and his female of every species of flesh enter into the ark, and the door closes behind them, the victims of unbelief can scarcely trust their own "sight." They approach the ark, and attempt to go in; but "the door is shut," and no human arm, whether within or without, is now able to force it. They are astounded; yet they will not believe! The day has been calm and clear, and the ground is dry and high, noon smiles cheerfully of "peace on earth, and good will towards men." And as no signs of a flood are apparent, the welkin rings with the shouts of victory and contempt from the multitude assembled to witness the seen. But lo! on a sudden the world is hushed! A zephyr comes! A speck is seen in the west! It increases It is a cloud! It rolls onward! It spreads over the sky! It darkens the earth! And the lightnings flash, and the thunders peal, and the earth is a fountain, and the heavens are rent, and the torrents fall, and the tornado sweeps, and the dwellings are shivered, and the infant cries, and the mother shrieks, and the father prays; but Mercy is deaf; for creation howls, and the living are dying, and the dying are dead, and the rocks are buried, and the trees are hid, and the hills are sunk, and the mountains are covered, and the waters prevail, and the ark is borne up,—a heaven secure from a watery hell,—and the

> "Sea and sky
> Look vast and lifeless in the Eternal Eye."

Ah! this was "their last to-morrow!" And this was the end of their unbelief!——Go back from the present a little more than three centuries and a half, and follow a Spanish adventurer through a long succession of difficulties, both private and public, till on the very eve of becoming a sacrifice to the faithlessness of a mutinous crew, when he stipulates only for "three days" longer; for the *sight* of the object of a *natural* faith; and lo! on the *third* a Continent is *found!* But go back a little more than forty centuries, and follow "a preacher of righteousness" through a whole hundred years over obstacles insurmountable except by supernatural assistance, until he comes within "seven days" of beholding the object of a Christian faith; and lo! on the *seventh* a world is *lost!* By the triumph of a natural faith Columbus became heir—not even to the glory which is by *sight*. But by the triumph of a Christian faith Noah "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." But though the sentence of condemnation was executed upon all flesh so to speak, in an instant, and the conflict of the preacher's faith with the unbelief of the world was now closed, the *trial* of the preacher's faith is still continued. The moan of destruction which commenced when the Lord shut him into the ark is echoed and re-echoed in the continued thunders and discharges from the windows of heaven, and in the wrathful surges of the deep. But though in tumult of the elements, and under thick clouds of anger, and at the mercy of the winds and the waves, that preacher of righteousness is still nourishing a Christian faith, with these wonderful works of God. The incessant pouring of the rain for the space of forty days and forty nights raises not a single doubt. Sabbath after Sabbath is hallowed, month after month rolls away, and that ark, without rudder or sails, rocks on the waves till the end of an hundred and fifty days, when it rests gently and safely down upon the very spot selected by Jehovah. According to the preacher's faith, He who brought the waters is drying them away. And is not this more sublime than any triumph of mere natural faith? Turn back from the present about twenty-five years and behold an Orientalist* struggling, day after day, at the utmost of the efforts, here with a prospect of success, and there with a actual defeat, to accomplish the long-cherished purpose of a natural faith, till, on a third attempt you behold him slowly and labourously ascending cubit on cubit upward, and still upward, and finally standing on the hitherto so-considered inaccessible summit of Mount Ararat! But turn back a little more than four thousand years, and behold a preacher of righteousness, month after month, with *no* defeat, with no *effort* even, descending cubit after cubit downward, and still downward, by a Christian faith, and at last resting down upon that very summit to which that noblest triumph of a natural faith could only climb up! But no land—no lofty peak is yet visible, and the ark weighs deep in the sea. And three months longer must the waters decrease before even the tops of the loftiest mountains can be seen. And forty days longer still waits that patient servant of God before he begins to be anxious about the condition of the earth. Then he opens the window and sends forth a raven. But that type of unbelief is a bird of the "not clean," and goes a hunting the spoils of the deluge. Betrayed by the raven, however, Noah *casts not away his confidence*, but after hallowing a Sabbath, sends forth a dove. Round and round above the window she flies, increasing her circle of observation both in height and circumference, until she cannot be seen for the distance. "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him in the ark." Another Sabbath is now hallowed, and the experiment with the dove is repeated. Faithful to her grand commission she darts up in her spiral circle as before, straining her eye in every direction till on a sudden she hovers a moment, as if gazing at a single point afar off, and then hies away in a straight line in all probability to the province of Akhaltzikhi. Hour after hour is run out, and yet there are no tidings from the little winged messenger. But, "late in the evening," a sound as if something were beating the air is succeeded by a feeble cooing on the roof, and he immediately opens the window and gratefully welcomes his panting dove. Surely, if the raven deserved a punishment, the dove has earned a reward. And according to a Bibical legend of the Mussulmans, "Noah blessed the dove, and Allah gave her a necklace of green." And by no means has she since been forgotten; for the Muses have sung her praises till

"————The gentle dove
Has become a name for trust and love."

And what is of infinitely higher regard, God himself has employed her similitude in sending the Holy Ghost. But what report has she brought from Akhaltzikhi? To Noah the message of his carrier-pigeon is the very emblem of peace; a revelation to his sight of God's remembrance of him. By faith he looked *through* the "olive-leaf pluckt off," and "*knew* that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And now he patiently waits for divine permission, and then marshals the remnant of "all flesh" down the peak to a convenient spot, and builds an altar to the Lord. And as of every kind of "clean" beasts there are three pairs and one, while of each kind of those which are "not clean," there is only a pair, he sacrifices the seventh of "every clean beast, and every clean fowl," as a thankoffering for his signal deliverance. And there, just descended from the towering Ararat on whose peak is resting alone and sublimely "the awful monument of the antediluvian world," and just arisen from the valley of the Araxes,—"the second cradle of the human race."—and sending up "a sweet savor to the Lord" in a song of adoration and praise, he celebrates a triumph of faith "by the which he condemns the world." The trial of faith, through which that preacher of righteousness has passed, has been great. Trial upon trial has been laid on him for these six hundred years. When Noah had separated himself from unbelievers, and at the end of the fifth century of his age, was found worthy to be commended as "just and perfect," God saw that *his* faith might safely be tried. And when no ordinary exhibitions of faith would suffice to point the world heavenward, it seemed fitting that there should be an effulgent illumination of that spirit who "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." It would seem that the first sphere of his faith was brought within the second horizon of his sight when, after a long but fruitless season of preaching righteousness to the world, the Lord announced to him, face to face, an approaching retribution of unbelief in a flood of waters. And the second sphere of his faith was brought within the third horizon of his sight when the Lord shut him into the ark, and whelmed the world in the deluge. Then, as upward and onward he was borne on the billows, the third sphere of his faith was brought within the fourth horizon of his sight when the Lord revealed to him in the olive-leaf his continued remembrance of the righteous. And as he left that vessel of gopher-wood on the summit of the mountain, the fourth sphere of his faith was brought within the fifth horizon of his sight when the Lord permitted him to erect an altar on the plain below, and lay a divinely provided and designed thank-offering thereon. And the fifth sphere of his faith is brought within the sixth horizon of his sight when he beholds in the cloud the covenant that the Lord will not again destroy the world by a flood. Hitherto he has walked altogether by faith. And now he has approached so near the ultimate objects of his faith, that sight itself almost pierces through its own horizon into that which is within the veil. And as often as the earth receives a gentle refreshing from the heavens, with renewed thanksgiving, he repairs to the altar now arched with the rainbow. And while *he* gazes from below, the Lord looks from above, and affords him a rapturous beholding by sight of his heavenly beholdings by faith—a rainbow in the realm of his faith, of which the raindow of his sight is but the symbol. And yet onward and upward "three hundred and fifty years" is he guided by the light of this symbolized glory, when he launches upon the swelling Jordan, advancing and ascending till the triumph over "the last enemy" is gained, and he anchors securely on the mount of God; where the last sphere of his faith is taken into his unbounded beholdings, and he receives from the Adorable and Heavenly Dove the assurance that "the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

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* Parrot.

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SERMON DCXXII.

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THE LOSS OF THE SOUL.

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MARK viii. 36, 37.

This is one of the most grave and momentous inquiries which can be proposed to the human mind. It is intended by our Lord to induce reflection—to awaken and warn the sinner, and influence him to "deny himself and take up his cross and follow" Christ. It implies that the soul may be lost, and that those who strive to gain the world, and are unwilling to give it up for the sake of religion, will lose their souls.

The subject of this discourse is, *The Loss of the Soul.*

What is meant by the loss of the soul? In answering this question, it is evident that we must rely chiefly on the teachings of revelation. The scene in which the reality is to transpire, is veiled from our sight. The facts about which we inquire, lie beyond the province of the senses. On this subject, conjecture is rash and arrogant. And reason is incompetent to pass judgment upon the divine administration, and to determine, independently of revelation, the proper penalty of sin. Human reason is liable to fall into great mistakes on this subject, on account of our self-interest, evil inclinations, and ignorance. We must not lose sight of the fact, that the subject has a relation to our own interests, and to the interests of our friends and fellow men; it awakens our self-love and partiality, and our tender and sympathetic affections; and whoever takes upon him to decide upon the guilt of sin, must be supposed to be conscious that the decision has a personal bearing upon himself, and consequently to be exposed to an improper bias and erroneous judgments. To this must be added the blinding influence of depraved inclinations, darkening the understanding and blunting the moral sensibilities. Man is a sinner. The *good* man, even though he has been convinced of sin, and has seen its criminality in himself, yet is not wholly free from the effect of sin, in obscuring his spiritual discernment, and disqualifying him to be an unprejudiced and righteous judge in his own case.

Besides, human reason lacks information. It can be qualified to judge truly and safely on this complicated and momentous subject, only by obtaining a perfect knowledge of the intrinsic malignity of sin in itself, and in all its relations. One needs to comprehend its relation to God, and how evil and bitter a thing it is to feel and act out disobedience to the great, and good, and infinite Jehovah. He needs to know the relation of sin to the soul, in which it works corruption and whose immortal interests it tends to destroy. He needs to understand the whole amount of good, which sin aims and tends to destroy in this world, and throughout the universe of intelligent creatures, propagating forever its own pollution among them, and spreading rebellion and ruin far and wide. No man has these qualifications. "Such knowledge is too wonderful" for us; it is too high and vast for us to attain. No one is, therefore, competent to judge of the ill-desert of sin, and the penalty which the wicked will suffer. No one can determine by reason independently of revelation, how *infinite* benevolence, guided by infinite wisdom and justice, will treat sin, nor what influence that treatment will have upon law, and justice, and government, and the welfare of all the worlds of God's intelligent universe. "Who knoweth the power of His anger?" Will you trust a little child to decide what is a proper punishment for a forger, who fraudulently writes a note? The child would be out of his place in judging of such a case, by reason of his limited knowledge of the bearings of the crime upon the interests of society. The wisest of men are not less incompetent to judge of the proper punishment of sin, not only through their ignorance, but through self-interest and prejudice.

It is the rightful prerogative of God to pass sentence upon the transgressors of his law. The only wise and safe course for us, is to learn from the word of God what that sentence will be. At length we shall learn it from the decisions of the last day. It is evident to every serious reader of the Bible, that the language of Scripture is very explicit and strong on this subject. It speaks of "losing the soul," of "the perdition of ungodly men," of "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." It declares "that the wages of sin is death." What are we to understand by this language?

I. It does not mean *annihilation*. Those who tell us that the loss of the soul consists in its ceasing to be, take upon them to make an assertion without reason and against Scripture. The visible appearances which follow in the train of death, might favor the presumption that death is the end of man. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." To the eye of sense his path terminates at the grave, and his plans come to an end. Some have supposed death as threatened to our first parents to be annihilation, and that man by sinning forfeited his existence, beyond this world. This supposition is founded on a superficial observation, and a false interpretation of Scripture.

It requires but little reflection to convince any one that death is not the destruction of anything—it is a dissolution of parts. But not a particle of the dying body ceases to be. The noble ship, which once rode proudly on the ocean, the glory of her builders, the hope of her owners, freighted with a precious cargo, may be wrecked and scattered in broken pieces over the waters, and parts of it sunk in the depths of the sea. We say that it is lost. But it is not annihilated; not a particle of it has passed out of existence. So death is the separation of the body and soul. The body goes to decay; it may be reduced to ashes; it may mingle with the earth; it may be dissipated in the air, but not a particle of it is annihilated. It rests, awaiting "the voice of the Son of man," at "the resurrection both of the just and of the unjust." The soul leaves the body at death. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." The soul like its eternal Author, is indestructible. No sword can touch it; no weapon of death can reach it. Our Saviour exhorts us to "fear not them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." After the body has been killed, there yet remains a living soul—a simple, spiritual, immaterial being. It is capable of existing in a perfectly disembodied state, as Abraham, Moses and Paul now exist, "absent from the body," and as "the spirits in prison" now exist. It is this which, after he hath killed the body, God hath power to cast into hell.

It is equally evident that the sentence to the *second death*, which is to be pronounced upon the wicked at the resurrection, does not imply a return to non-existence. Nothing short of Omnipotence has power to extinguish the conscious existence of a living soul; and God has never signified to us that he intends to exercise his power in such a way. He has foretold the *destruction* of the wicked, he has declared that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." But he has not intimated, that the end of a life of sin is the extinction of consciousness in a sleep that shall "know no waking." There is a force in the terms, "destruction," "death," and kindred expressions of Scripture, which is not exhausted by the idea of the cessation of existence. This was not the purport of the threatening to Adam. It was not comprehended in the execution of the threatening. The declaration to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," was to take effect at once. It was fulfilled in its true intent: its import in this respect was plain, and cannot be mistaken. He did die *that day;* any other doctrine impeaches the truth of the Bible. But his death was not a "return to blank nothingness." In the very day of his transgression, Adam died. *Man* died in the import of the threatening, and that death in effect, includes the sentence, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"—and all the other specific evils, which God in his infinite justice shall ever see proper to inflict upon the transgressor. The threatening did not preclude a remedy. It was such a death as created an exigency for redemption. "For we thus judge," says the apostle Paul, "that if Christ died for all, then were *all dead;* and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." It is such a death, as they who neglect the great salvation will be dying forever, under a forfeiture of all claim to the favor of God, and subjection to his displeasure.

The loss of the soul, therefore, is not the extinction of its conscious existence. It lends no countenance to that "Christianized Materialism," which teaches with reverential speech, the seductive error that the soul sleeps with the body at death in an unconcious state, and that the wicked at the resurrection will be annihilated; thus denying the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. No, the soul is immortal. Its state and mode of existence may be changed from time to time, but it will continue to exist evermore; it cannot by extinction, perish; the material tenement is its tabernacle. When it is taken down, the soul enters a new abode.

II. The loss of the soul does not imply any suspension or diminution of its *powers* and *capabilities.* We behold among mankind the same tokens of a moral nature, but very different grades on the scale of endowment. The soul that is lost, continues to possess forever all its faculties and susceptibilities, and carries with it all its knowledge and culture. In the future world, it is the same intelligent moral agent that it was here in the body. Wrecked as it may be as to its prospects on the shores of eternity, it will not lose its identity nor its properties. It is, consciously, the same soul that refused here when God called, which in eternity will call, and God will not hear—the same that here repulsed the Saviour's grace, will there be repulsed by "the wrath of the Lamb." The soul will forever think, and feel and desire; it will be forever capable of hope, though hope may never come into its prison of despair; it will forever be susceptible of joy, though sorrow may be its bed. The memory, which Bunyan has called "the register of the soul," will recal the sins which the man has heretofore committed, and recal also the word that forbade it—*Son, remember*, will be the employment of the lost soul. There will be no forgetfulness; yet nothing will be thought of, but to the greater wounding of the spirit. The memory will let these thoughts down upon the conscience, and make it cry reproachfully, "You knew your Master's will, but you did it not." Conscience will not sleep, nor be dull, nor be misled, in hell. The understanding will be employed in apprehending the depths of sin which the man has loved, the good nature of God, whom he has hated, and the blessings of eternity which he has despised. Every touch of the understanding upon the memory will be like the touch of "sharp arrows of the mighty, with burning coals of juniper." Imagination also will be active, with no less terror and perplexity, as a man, by fear bereft of his senses, starts and stares with fearful thoughts. There will be deep thoughts of the nature and occasions of sin, of God, of separation from him, and of the coming eternity;—thoughts which will clash with glory inaccessible, clash with justice, clash with law, clash with self, clash with hell—passions that will be galling and stinging and dropping their poison into the sore, wounded, fretted spirit.

The loss of the soul implies, therefore, no suspension nor diminution of its susceptibilities and faculties. If the memory, and conscience, and understanding of the soul were stupefied at death, or contracted and restricted, so that they could no longer recur to the deeds done in the body, the dreadfulness of the loss would seem to the unsanctified heart to be quite tolerable. But its essential powers admit of no such abridgement or slumber. The final loss of which we speak, will waken and enlarge and quicken all its powers. And it will be forever itself the exactest possible "daguerreotype picture of all its transient states and passing acts."

III. Let us attend to the positive representation of the subject. The loss of the soul is its *loss of holiness*, and the consequent loss of its usefulness and happiness forever under the deserved wrath of God. It is the endurance of the just punishment of its sins. We are assured by the Scriptures that the favor of God is life, and that the indispensable qualification for enjoying his favor is holiness. Being "dead in sin," the impenitent soul is already lost. It is kept for a season under a system of reclaiming measures and means of salvation. The Redeemer "came to seek and to save that which was lost." Under this remedial system, the sinner enjoys a respite—the invitations of heavenly mercy beseech him to be reconciled to God; these sacred sabbaths, the sanctuary, the Bible, Christian friends, are cords of sweet influence, drawing him to the Saviour; the goodness of God on every side delights his senses; the twinging stripes of divine wrath, are for a time stayed. But soon the soul passes away from the world in its sins, and it is then completely and forever lost—lost in guilt and pollution, and abandoned to the elements of remorse and sorrow, which are within and around it.'

To its proper end and happiness in glorifying God, and in benefiting and blessing men, it is lost; *lost, forever* LOST. The darkness through which it wanders, the chains which hold it, the agonies and degradations that accumulate upon it, are such as strike the mind with fearful horror, and smite down hope with a fatal blow.

Lost is its opportunity of salvation. No inviting voice of an atoning Saviour is heard in hell; no gentle strivings of the Spirit are felt;—no offer of pardoning mercy is ever made there.

Lost are its earthly comforts and means of gratification, which here mitigated the curse, and cheered the heart with joyous sensations and pleasant hopes.

Lost are its restraints which surrounded it in this world, and which operated as sweet and salutary forces, to hold its depravity in check, and kept it often from dashing downward in corruption and iniquity with reckless and impious haste. Now, set free from restraining influences, it rages wildly and blasphemes God, a terror to itself, and "a dread to even unsightly monsters of the pit."

The sacred writers generally set forth the loss of the soul in figurative language. The most fearful imagery is employed on this subject which the human mind can conceive. "There is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." There is "the smoke of the torment that ascendeth up forever and ever." There is "the everlasting fire," that never shall be quenched. There is "the worm" that gnaws and "never dies." There is the pit over which hangs "the blackness of darkness." There is "the resurrection of damnation," and the lifting up the eyes in torment, and the being cast away by Jehovah in his righteous indignation. Such language is used in the Bible, because it is best adapted to express and to awaken just conceptions of the evil to be endured.

Some may attempt to relieve themselves of the painful apprehension of the soul's loss, by the idea that the terrific language of Scripture which describes it, is not to be understood literally. But a simple confidence in the veracity of the Word of God will assure us that the metaphors do not exaggerate the reality, nor mislead the child-like belief on this subject. No words used in their literal sense could adequately express the vivid conceptions of the writers, or do justice to the awful subject. In the metaphorical language, derived from the most terrific objects in nature, there is a depth of meaning which we cannot fathom, but which is the more dreadful because it is inexpressible. None can know all that is implied in the loss of the soul, unless he shall be so unhappy as to learn it by experience.

We have no reason to doubt that there is a literal significance in the indignation and wrath of God, and in the positive punishments which God by his just judgment will render to his impenitent enemies. "He shall gather the good into his presence, and cast the bad away," and deliver them up to the torments of the devil and their own guilty consciences and deep thoughts, as on a burning rack—the due reward of their sins. In its nature, the loss of the soul is a peculiar loss. He that loses his soul, loses himself. "For what is a man advantaged," says Christ, "if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away." If by getting the world, he lose himself, the loss is without a parallel. It is a loss which he will not be able to consider quietly, and sit down patiently under the sense of it. There can be no such grace in hell as patient enduring. There will be no foundation for patience. The providence of God is the foundation of patience to the afflicted. "But men go not to hell by providence but by sin." And sin being the cause of his loss, he will justify God, and tear himself with self-tormenting thoughts, laying the fault upon himself. For we know that "there is nothing which will sooner work vexation of spirit in a man than a full conviction in his conscience that by his own folly and wrong action, persisted in against caution, and counsel, and reason, to the contrary, he has brought himself into extreme distress and misery." How much more will it make this fire burn when he shall see what kind report God gave him of sin, of his grace, and of hell, and yet, for a toy, for a bauble, he was so foolish and perverse as to neglect the door of hope, and voluntarily bring this loss upon himself. Verily we may ask, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" There is a force in the expressions of Scripture on this subject which may well make us tremble, and inspire us with an active and abiding dread of the threatened evil. Had there been less of indefiniteness and awful mysteriousness in the inspired representations of this dreadful loss, the minute description might have given us a clearer conception of the nature and mode of the penal retribution, and made us more familiar with it, but it would not have been more effectual to persuade men to turn from the ways of sin, and make them obedient and holy. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Some may doubt the justice of this terrible penalty. But we should remember that God is Judge. He will not be influenced by our doubts, but will do what he knows to be just, and what is just, rendering to every sinner "according to the deeds done in the body."

We should guard against the influence of *mere feeling*, in judging of God's holy government, and in contemplating the penalty of sin. Our feelings may be benevolent and sympathetic, but they are limited and, in many cases, incompatible with the permanent welfare of the kingdom of God. It is the part of pious submission, distrustful of self, to yield to the high behest, "Be still and know that I am God."

Some may charge this doctrine with embittering all happiness, and may wonder how those who believe it can be happy in this world or the next. But it should be remembered, that there is a bright side to the divine economy, and the brightness is so great and glorious, that to the devoted Christian, intent on admiring its glory, the darkness is hardly perceptible. Perdition is a dark spot in the moral universe. But we are to behold also Christ's mission and death to *save* sinners. We are to rejoice and glory in a crucified Redeemer, and the hope of salvation through him. The saints in glory will behold God on the throne without "clouds and darkness round about him;" they will understand his love and justice, and the reasons of his administration. His mysterious acts, whether in this life, or in the future, will appear to them, in the light of eternity, to be all wise, and right, and good. And they will join with angel-worshippers in everlasting "Alleluias," with no murmurings at his past decisions, to mar their felicity.

The loss of the soul, duly realized, would restrain the spirit of worldliness, and lead us to use this world as not abusing it. The pursuits of pleasure and schemes for accumulating wealth, "choke the word," and drown the souls of multitudes in destruction and perdition. Here is the great danger which threatens the immortal interests of men at the present day. The extraordinary prosperity of the country, in its increase of business and wealth, has stimulated the masses, and enlisted the energies of men in money-making. Rushing eagerly forward, they are in great danger of forgetting God and their souls. Is it not so? Turn your thoughts to the scenes of coming destiny. Could you reject the Saviour if you realized what is comprehended in the loss of the soul? Suppose you have goods laid up for many years, "What shall it profit?"

The piety of Christians, in many cases, withers under an absorbing worldliness, and degenerates to a dull and lifeless formality. How shall this declension be avoided, and the heart be secured and elevated above the stupefying, bewildering influence of the world? We must pause and consider how these things will appear on our passage to eternity, and amidst the decisions of the righteous tribunal. What if hope should then depart, and dread despair lift its unavailing cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

The loss of the soul, duly realized, would make us anxious to save others, as well as ourselves. We are journeying with fellow travellers to eternity. We should speak to them of the way and the end, and strive, by our prayers, our counsels, and our kind efforts, to turn their feet from the broad road to destruction, into the path of life and heaven.

The loss of the soul! Let me say that the reality far surpasses the representation that has now been presented. The time is not distant when every impenitent sinner will be amazed at his present indifference to the great concerns of his soul. The present world will then have passed away. Time will have numbered its years. The vast world to which you go, will have opened—eternity, heaven, and hell. The sinner's doom will be fixed. What a prospect is this! Prepare to meet the awful scenes of eternity in peace.

What can I do, in bringing this discourse to a conclusion, but to hold out the signal of hope: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Ah, sinner, your soul is in danger of being lost forever, and immense difficulties lie in the way of its being saved.

Your soul has been redeemed by the blood of the Son of God; it was worth the infinite ransom; and it is worth being saved by a life of faith, and self-denial, and prayer. Your soul has been cared for in heaven. Will you not care for it yourself? Christ offers to save you. Will you not come to him that you may have life?

You see the prospect before you, of eternal communion with the wailings of the lost. You may shrink from the effort necessary to escape the coming doom. There is the plea of business, the plea of pleasure, and the plea of carnal apathy, coming up in favor of some more convenient season. But consider, and be wise: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

SERMON DCXXIII.

BY REV. WILLIAM WHITTAKER,

PLAINFIELD, N. J.

IMMORTALITY.

"If a man die, shall he live again?"—JOB xiv. 14.

THE belief of a future state of happiness or misery seems to have been coeval with the existence of man. The Almighty revealed the doctrine of the soul's immortality to the original progenitors of the human race, and by them it has been transmitted to their posterity. It is beyond all controversy that the whole nation of the Jews, with the exception of the Sadducees, did believe in a state of rewards and punishments after death, even *before* "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." The truth of this remark will appear perfectly obvious to the unprejudiced mind, by a reference to the answer which Abraham returned to the question of Dives, when he requested him to send Lazarus to warn his five brethren, lest they also should come into the same place of torment. Abraham said unto him, "they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they hear *not* Moses and the prophets; neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Now this passage proves conclusively that the Old Testament scriptures do contain evidence sufficient to convince the most skeptical, that there is beyond the grave, a heaven for the righteous, and a hell for the wicked.

This doctrine will receive further confirmation from the Mosaic account of the creation, recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis: "And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." In this declaration, there is an evident distinction between the material and the immaterial part of man—the body and the soul; in accordance with the language of Solomon, recorded in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, and the seventh verse: "Then shall the *dust* return to the *earth* as it was, and the *spirit* shall return unto *God* who gave it."

Another argument in favor of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, is derived from the language of David when speaking of the death of his child. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Now the consciousness that David should follow his child to the dark and silent tomb, and that the stern tyrant would hold them both in his iron grasp forever, could not infuse one drop of consolation into his bruised and broken spirit. It was the firm conviction that he should meet it again, in a brighter and a better world, beyond the ravages of death, that enabled him to submit with becoming fortitude and resignation to the mysterious and painful dispensation of divine Providence.

Job, under all the afflictions and persecutions which he was called to endure in this present life, was supported by the assurance that his "Redeemer liveth,—that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth—whom he shall see for himself, and his eyes should behold and not another."

From the several instances which we have thus noticed, it must be obvious to the reflecting mind, that the doctrine of a future state was believed by the great body of the Jewish nation before the introduction of the Gospel dispensation.

If we pass from the Scriptures of the Old Testament to the philosophical writings of ancient Greece and Rome, we shall find many beautiful and sublime passages relating to a life beyond the grave. Their sages and philosophers felt the seeds of mortality within them; they saw daily instances of it round about them, but how far the power of death reached, they knew not. They beheld the body deposited in the grave; but whether man had an immortal part which would survive the ravages of death and live forever, was a problem which they could not solve. Such thoughts as these, we may suppose, would naturally arise in the mind of a reflecting heathen, and we therefore conclude that they must have had some indistinct conceptions of a future state of existence. They talked much of their *Elysian fields*, where the souls of the good would enjoy pleasure and delight, and of *Tartarus*, where the wicked would be punished forever.

Socrates, in the full prospect of his own dissolution, makes use of the following language: "Death would be very hard to me, if I were not persuaded that when I depart hence, I shall go to the wise God, and to those who are already departed this life, without doubt, abundantly better, and much happier than those who are left behind." After his condemnation, he is represented as saying to his judges: "I have a good hope that it will happen well to me, that I am thus sent to death. What delight to live and converse with the immortal heroes and poets of antiquity. It becomes you also, my friends, to be of good comfort with regard to death, since no evil, in life or death, can befall virtuous men, whose true interest is ever the concern of Heaven."

Likewise, the great Cyrus, in a similar manner, is said to have thus expressed his hopes on his death bed to his own children: "Think not that when I shall leave you, I shall be nowhere or nothing, for even whilst I continued with you, ye could not see my soul, but ye only knew it to be in this body by my actions. And so, in like manner *after death*, ye may believe that my soul lives, though ye see it not, for never could I be persuaded to think that a soul which lives in a mortal body should die when it leaves it, or that the soul should be without sense when it escapes from its senseless companion, the body; *but quite the contrary*, that then it begins properly *to live*, and to be most wise and happy when it is broken loose from the chains of an encumbering flesh."

Such was the language of the most enlightened heathen, in relation to that most important inquiry: "If a man die, shall he live again?" before the clearer light of the gospel shed its illuminating beams upon the world. But as mankind approached nearer to the Christian dispensation, their views assumed a more definite and tangible form, just as the "rising sun shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." Some founded their notions of a future state, on the immortal and spiritual nature of the soul—some from the strong desire of immortality implanted in the human breast, and others from the unequal distribution of good and evil in the present life, or the seeming inequalities in the dispensations of divine Providence. It is true, that after all, they were involved in great darkness on the subject; all their investigations ended only in doubt and uncertainty, yet the bare possibility of living again after death, afforded them a degree of consolation, and they were willing to hope that it might prove true.

Suffice it to say, that the belief of a future state is common to all ages and nations of the world, where all mankind will be happy or miserable, according to their conduct in the present life. It is a fact standing prominently forth on the broad basis of man's history, from the beginning of the world up to the present hour. Proof of this fact is to be found in the most refined American, who basks in the full splendor of gospel light and liberty, and in the wildest savage who roams the desert, and scours the forest for his prey—in the most enlightened Christian, who "looks through nature, up to Nature's God," and the dark idolator who deifies a river—falls prostrate before the noon-day sun, or calls upon the stars to behold him, while he worships the silent moon in the still hour of night.

Such is the nature of man, that he cannot live contentedly upon the things of time and sense; it is not in the power of any finite object to satisfy the cravings of his rational and immortal mind. Though the world of nature is redolent of life and beauty, and teeming with wonders to call forth our gratitude and praise, yet in vain do we look for an object commensurate with our wishes, or on which the restless spirit may expend its deathless energies. Amidst all the vexations and disappointments of this life, man looks for consolation to the *unseen* and *eternal;* he penetrates the veil which hides futurity from mortal sight, and finds rest only in the paradise of God. "That is the mark we tend to, for the soul can take no lower flight, and seek no meaner goal."

How deplorable—how hopelessly wretched would the condition of man be in this vale of tears, if bereft of the cheering anticipations which the gospel of Jesus can inspire. He feels that, day by day, he is verging to the grave—that soon the frail tenement of humanity will crumble into its original elements—that the glorious sun will shine on him no more, and that he must lie down in the place of darkness and silence. All the delights that charm and gladden him here, will soon fade and pass away before his darkened vision, and he must bid a final farewell to the dear companions of his earthly pilgrimage. While indulging in this train of melancholy reflections, he may be disposed to adopt the language of Henry Kirk White, so accordant with his own feelings. "Fifty years, and who will think of Henry? I shall sink as sinks the traveller in the crowded streets of busy London. Some short bustles caused, a few inquiries, and the crowd close in, and all's forgotten."

Now, under such a terrible revolution of nature—such a sundering of near and dear connections—such an oblivion of all that is bright and beautiful in the world within and the world without, what but the sure and certain hope of surviving the wreck and ruin of all terrestrial things, and entering upon a state of perfect and uninterrupted beatitude, where death and the curse are known no more, can calm the troubled spirit, and give the weary rest.

The gospel not only teaches us that we shall live again after death, but permits us to indulge the pleasing hope of reunion with the loved and lost of earth. Who can go down to the silent chambers of the grave, without distraction at the thought of being separated forever from the companions of our earthly pilgrimage?

"They have not perished—no,
  Kind words, remembered voices, once so sweet,
Smiles radiant long ago,
  And features, the great soul's apparent seat,—
All shall come back—each tie
Of pure affection shall be knit again."

SERMON DCXXIV.

BY REV. WILLIAM WHITTAKER,

PLAINFIELD, N. J.

RECOGNITION.

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"—1 Thess. ii. 19.

"I must confess," says the sainted Baxter, "as the experience of my own soul, that the expectation of loving my friends in heaven, principally kindles my love to them while on earth. If I thought I should never know them, and consequently never love them after this life is ended, I should number them with temporal things, and love them as such; but I now delightfully converse with my pious friends in a firm persuasion that I shall converse with them forever, and I take comfort in those that are dead, or absent, believing that I shall shortly meet them in heaven, and love them with a heavenly love." Such have been the sentiments and feelings of the vast majority of Christians in every portion and period of the world, and they are in perfect harmony with the teachings of revelation, and the deductions of sound philosophy.

And why should we not indulge "the pleasing hope, the fond desire" of renewing in another and a better world, the fellowship of kindred hearts which has been so suddenly interrupted by the stern mandate of death. Why should we not meet and commune with those pure and holy beings, with whom we have taken sweet counsel, as we have walked together through the checkered lanes of life's weary pilgrimage to the city of habitation? Friendship, pure, warm, disinterested, and founded on religious principles, is not a flower of earth, frail as it is beautiful, which rises up before us like an oasis in the desert, to refresh and gladden our fainting spirits, and then leaves us to mourn over its faded loveliness in all the bitterness of disappointed hope. No, it is a plant of heavenly origin, and, though frequently made to bend before the blasts and storms of this uncongenial clime, yet when transplanted into the paradise above, where there "is purer air, a softer sky, and a never-setting sun," it will put forth more vigorous and healthy shoots, and flourish in immortal youth and beauty. Shall this reasonable expectation, then, of meeting once more with the loved and lost of earth, prove a delusion—the creature of an unbridled fancy, and an over heated imagination? Shall the longing desire of the disconsolate widow, and the helpless orphan, to look once more upon the husband and the father, never be gratified? Why, then, is it implanted in the breast of the bereaved and suffering children of humanity? We ask, would a being of infinite wisdom and love present this heavenly cordial to the fainting spirits and quivering lips of his dear children in this vale of tears; just let them taste its blessedness, and then, with cruel hand, dash it to the ground? This can never be the conduct of him whose nature and whose name is love—his goodness, his wisdom, his justice and his truth, all stand pledged to grant the reasonable desires of his own children.

How far our future blessedness will depend on the knowledge and society of our Christian friends, it is impossible for us to determine; but we may reasonably suppose that it will be greatly augmented by the holy fellowship and converse of those kindred spirits, in whose presence we delighted to dwell, and by whose side we loved to linger in this vale of tears. There are several portions of the word of God which seem to throw light on this subject, and which may aid us in our investigations. The Church triumphant is frequently described under the beautiful simile of a *family*, and it is one which awakens in the breast the tenderest feelings, and calls forth the loveliest and sweetest reminiscences. In a Christian family there is uninterrupted intercourse—mutual affection, a congeniality of taste and sentiment, and personal knowledge. Without acquaintance, there can be no friendship; and as this principle will be carried to the highest possible state of perfection in the world to come, it would seem absolutely necessary that we should have a clear perception, and a perfect knowledge of the persons of those with whom it shall be our happiness to associate forever. Is not this what Paul meant when he addressed our text to his Thessalonian converts: "For what is hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?"

That Christian relatives and friends shall distinctly remember in the eternal world those whom they have left behind, may be fairly inferred from the language that passed between Abraham and Dives. It is plainly evident from this parable, that the departed do not forget the living, nor yet the past events of their own personal history. "But Abraham said, Son, *remember* that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest sent him to my father's house. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

That saints shall derive pleasure from meeting together in heaven, may be determined by a reference to several passages of Scripture. The meeting of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and Lazarus reposing in the bosom of the "father of the faithful," affords not only the pleasing hope that we shall know each other hereafter, but that this knowledge will tend to augment our felicity. Of the patriarchs, it is said "they were gathered unto their people." Now, by this expression, it could not be meant the gathering of their *bodies* to those of their kindred, for in this sense, neither Abraham nor Isaac were gathered unto their people. The former was buried in the cave of Machpelah in Canaan, while his kindred were interred either in Ur of the Chaldees, or in Haran, and the latter was buried with none of his friends, except his parents. The meaning, therefore, is, that their immortal spirits were gathered to the "general assembly and Church of the first born," to the congregation of the blessed in the celestial paradise.

That we shall recognise our Christian friends in heaven, receives additional confirmation from the language of our Saviour to the penitent malefactor. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" and if so, we may reasonably conclude that they would know each other, and that this knowledge would afford unspeakable happiness to the ransomed spirit of the dying thief.

The idea of meeting again our departed Christian friends after death, seems to be instinctive in the human soul, and inseparable from its very constitution. The desire is so strong—so natural, so innocent, so intimately connected with our highest and holiest feelings, and binds us so closely with invisible and eternal realities, that it cannot be sinful to entertain and cherish it. Under the influence of this delightful anticipation, how many of the loved and lost seem to revive in our recollection; we see them again, not agonized with pain, and wasting away under the consuming power of disease—not cold and motionless, and clad in the vestments of the grave, but clothed with spiritual, incorruptible and glorious bodies, "like unto the angels of God," having thrown off the dishonors of the tomb, and "emerged into life, day light and liberty." How many voices long since hushed in death, now speak to us in tones of celestial sweetness, bidding us "not to sorrow as those without hope for them who have fallen asleep in Jesus." How precious to the worn and wearied spirit of the Christian pilgrim is this hope of reunion in the land of the blest. It rolls away the dark clouds of sorrow which gather around the soul, and fills it with joy and peace through believing. It enables the afflicted believer to look beyond the Jordan of death to those bright mansions in the skies, where dwell the "pure in heart," and to say with the Christian poet—

"I feel that, however long to me
The slumber of the grave may be,
I shall know them again 'mid the countless throng,
Who shall bear their part in the Seraphim's song."

The Roman orator, Cicero, gives utterance to sentiments, on this pleasing subject, which will be cordially adopted by every child of God. "For my part, I feel myself transported with the desire of seeing my departed friends, whose characters I respected, and whose persons I loved. Bent on my journey to them, I would not be recalled by the promise of restored youth. Oh! glorious day, when I shall leave the tumult and corruption of the world, and join the society and council of divine minds! Of all that have left the world before me, I weep for Cato the most. His *soul*, however, did not desert me, but still looked back upon me in its flight to those happy mansions, to which he was assured I should one day follow him. And if I seemed to bear his death with fortitude, it was because I supported myself under the consoling reflection, that we could not long be separated." Is not this what the apostle meant, when, addressing in the text the Thessalonian converts, he said: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Did he not endeavor to afford consolation to the sorrowing and bereaved, by the assurance that, "those who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him, and so shall they be ever with the Lord. We shall *live together* with him." And why should we not indulge this pleasing hope—this fond desire?

Though it may not be plainly and expressly made known in the word of God, yet it is deducible from the very nature of future blessedness, which is a state of infinite perfection and bliss. If *memory* shall not be defective; if *knowledge* shall be progressive in heaven, then the dearest ties which we formed on earth, will not, *cannot*, be buried in everlasting forgetfulness. A lovely and precious child once lost her mother at an age too early to fix the loved features in her remembrance. She was as frail as beautiful, and soon faded away. She would lie upon the lap of the friend who took a mother's care of her, and winding one wasted arm about her neck, would say: "Now tell me about my dear mamma." And when the oft-told tale had been repeated, she would softly say, "Take me into the parlor; I want to see my mother," and would lie for hours contentedly gazing on her portrait. At last, the trying hour came; the dew of death was already on the flower, as its life sun was going down. All at once a brightness, as if from the upper world, burst over the child's colorless countenance—the eyelids flashed open, the lips parted, and she looked piercingly into the far above. "Mother!" she cried, with transport in her tone, and passed with a sweet smile into her mother's bosom.

Perhaps there is nothing on earth that affords greater joy than the reunion of dearly beloved friends, after a long and painful separation. I will not attempt to describe the feelings of the fond mother, who has been compelled to mourn over the absence of her only son, while far away upon the tempestuous ocean. Wearisome days and nights were indeed appointed to her; every gust of wind, and every flash of lightning that penetrated her lonely dwelling convulsed her very soul, as she pictured to her excited imagination the yawning gulf, and the unfathomable abyss of the ocean into which she feared the object of her anxious solicitude had sunk to rise no more. And when, after months and years of bitterness, spent over that child of many prayers and tears, the kindly winds of heaven wafted to her the delightful intelligence that her sailor boy was yet alive—what mind can conceive—what tongue can tell the rapture of that moment, when she greeted his well-known voice, and clasped in her fond embrace the dearest idol of her affections?

How unspeakably great then—how inconceivably rapturous will be the joy experienced by the redeemed and glorified, when they shall be permitted to meet and welcome to their own bright and blissful abode those whom they have loved, and left for a while in this vale of tears. How soothing to the chafed and sorrowing spirit of the mourner, is the thought that soon the wound which death has made will be healed—that the tears which death has caused us to shed will be dried up, and that "the beautiful beings which now flit before us like visions, will stay in our presence forever." What an exhilarating and delightful prospect is thus presented to cheer the worn and wearied spirit of the sorrowing Christian—to banish from his heart every feeling of sadness, and to make him triumph even amid the ravages of death.

In conclusion, let this subject administer consolation to those who are called to mourn the loss of valued and pious friends. In the order of Providence, you have been compelled to drink the bitter cup of affliction—you have stood beside the dying bed of an affectionate, faithful and truly godly parent—you have watched the sun of her earthly being shedding his last lingering ray upon her once bright, but now faded countenance—you have marked with intense solicitude the fluttering pulse, the sunken eye, and the hollow cheek. At last weary nature, worn out with pain and suffering, yielded beneath the pressure of its load, and the convulsive struggle and dying groan proclaimed in language too plain to be misunderstood, that the dark night of death had thrown its sable covering over the inanimate form before you. And now, with a slow and solemn step, you follow to the tomb to see, with tearful eyes and aching hearts, the coffin lowered into its final resting place, and cheerless oblivion close her dark portals over that once loved form—now cold and dead. But is there no ray of light to shine upon the incumbent darkness—must moonless and everlasting night triumph over all that you once loved and valued? No, sweeter than odors wafted from the mountains of spices, and more enchanting far than the music of the spheres, comes the cheering announcement: "I am the resurrection and the life. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

Jesus of Nazareth has grappled with the last enemy; He has entered his gloomy caverns; He has burst asunder his cold and icy fetters, and poured a flood of immortal radiance upon that dark prison house, where nought but despair had ever been known. Lift up your heads, then, and rejoice, ye weeping and afflicted pilgrims; it is true your dear friend lies motionless and cold in death, but she has only "fallen asleep in Jesus, and if she sleep, she shall do well." The all-searching eye of God is not dim, that it cannot see, nor his arm shortened that it cannot save, and at the appointed time life will revisit her mouldering arm, and she will bloom again with unfading verdure and loveliness in the region of cloudless day. "Arise, then, and depart, for this is not your rest. Go your way, till the end be, for ye shall stand in your lot at the end of the days." Take your staff, and journey on toward the promised land—go forward in obedience to the divine mandate, watched over by a father's eye, and guided by a father's hand—compassed about with a great cloud of invisible spectators, cheering you onward in your Christian course; and when you come to the margin of that stream—"the narrow stream of death"—which separates between you and the celestial paradise, a convoy of angels shall be sent to bear you over the swellings of Jordan, and waft your ransomed spirits to that blissful clime—

"Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns."

SERMON DCXXV.

BY REV. JOHN DUNCAN,

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ENOCH'S WALK WITH GOD.

"And Enoch walked with God."—GENESIS v. 24.

A single word of commendation from the mouth of God is amply sufficient to carry one's name and virtues down to the end of time. The biography of faithful Enoch is comprised in *three words;* while the exploits of Alexander—the career of Napoleon, and of many of earth's bloody heroes, require *many volumes* to record them.

This short sentence, comprising the whole life of this good man, is a luminous point in the world's history, which no achievements in statesmanship, or martial heroism can ever equal or obscure, and which no length of time can ever blot out. And yet, I doubt not, we have many such examples of piety and humility in our own times. God saw fit, in the case of Enoch, to exempt him from the great curse resting upon all the posterity of Adam, in consequence of transgression—the curse of death. He was, therefore, translated, so that he should not suffer its pangs and struggles, nor go into its dark and gloomy chambers. An event so strange—so entirely out of the ordinary course of nature—must have originated in a cause as singular. Adam and Eve, the first guilty pair, had already paid their debt to Nature, and been gathered under the curse of a broken law, to their resting place in the earth. Fifty-seven years after this event, Enoch, without tasting of death, was changed from mortal to immortality, and thus introduced into the presence of God, and the paradise above.

In the translation of Enoch, the great work and victory of the promised Messiah was clearly seen. The world could read in this event, the glorious resurrection of all the dead, and the nature of that great mission the Son of God was to fulfil on earth. Being the seventh from Adam, Enoch was cotemporary with him more than three hundred years, and hence, through Adam, he had a perfect knowledge of the creation, and the fall—the glory preceding, and the misery succeeding, that terrible event. And he must have learned the nature of that promise made to Adam—that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.

Even the heathen venerated *Enoch*. The Babylonians consider him as the founder of their astrology, and tell us that he is the same who is called Atlas by the Greeks, who, from his profound skill in natural objects, and particularly from his discoveries in astronomy, was hyperbolically said to sustain the heavens on his shoulders. Eusebius, the great ecclesiastical historian, who wrote in the fourth century, quotes Eupolempus—then an old heathen writer, of great credit and celebrity—who speaks of Enoch in relation to many of the idolatrous practices of the nations of the east. The Arabian writers call him Edris, and speak of the great extent of his knowledge. The translations of the Grecian heroes, or demigods, especially Hesperus and Astrea, who were said to have ascended to heaven alive, and to have been turned into stars and celestial signs—the Dhruva among the Hindoos; the Buddha, among the Ceylonese; and the Xaca, among the Calmuchs of Siberia, all may be traced up to the translation of this good man, of whom it is faithfully recorded that "he walked with God." How extensive must his influence have been, and how pre-eminent his virtues, to have been held in such universal estimation in an age like that in which he lived.

The very name of Enoch shows the piety of Jared his father. His name signifies to instruct, imitate, dedicate, and probably his father partook of the spirit of his father again; for Mahalaleel seems to have been devoted in his piety, and close in his walk with God. But the godly character so much commended in our text, Enoch, under the Divine blessing, formed himself. He walked with God; this was a voluntary act; he chose the company and the companionship of God above that of all men. The Hebrew word signifies to set himself to walk with God, and then he did walk with God. It has, therefore, two independent meanings—the one is a fixedness of purpose; the other is a reflex influence of this purpose upon him who conceives it. The purpose of Enoch was to lead a holy life, and then by divine grace the influence of this purpose upon his soul, was to sustain it, and to bring it into companionship and communion with God.

He, doubtless, had the good counsel of Seth, Enos, Cainan and others, who very much contributed to his spiritual strength and resolution. How powerful is parental example. If all parents would imitate Jared, and follow his example in early dedicating their children to the Lord, how universally they would find, that "just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined;" and that when a child is trained up in the way he should go, he will not depart from his early counsel and instruction when he becomes old.

Enoch was a *prophet*, and the first of all the prophets who prophesied of a judgment to come. This remarkable revelation seems to have been made to him, in consequence of his eminent piety. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and that hope in His mercy." The language in which he declares an approaching judgment, is majestic and sublime, scarcely equaled by any of the later prophets, or even the apostles.

In tracing Enoch's walk with God, we shall learn what our own ought to be. Let us inquire WHAT THE FIGURATIVE EXPRESSION OF OUR TEXT MEANS—"WALKING WITH GOD."

I. The expression walking together always denotes *strong personal friendship and agreement.*

The question is asked by one of old: "Can two walk together, except they are agreed?" By nature men are said to walk away from God, having no desire to be found with him, or to possess a knowledge of His ways. They have lost his favor, and they feel a consciousness that they are unlike Him—hating what He loves, and loving what He hates—and, therefore, cannot be happy in his presence. The Apostle Paul says: "Therefore, as by one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Condemnation, resulting from known and acknowledged guilt, destroys all self confidence. This the sinner feels, and he fears to come into the presence of his Maker, but withdraws into deeper darkness lest his deeds should be reproved. He can, therefore, never walk with God, and lift up his face and cry, "Abba, Father," unless he is redeemed by the blood of Christ, and so reconciled unto God.

The whole human family by nature, are disinherited—alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, "Children of wrath," having no hope, and without God in the world. To this universal apostasy there is not one single exception. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand that did seek after God. "They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." This moral condition is ours, and involves deep, settled hostility to the character, the purposes, and the moral government of God. "The carnal mind is enmity *itself* against God, and is not subject to His law, neither can it be," till it is subdued and renovated by grace. "From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness in us." Now, to walk with a God of such immaculate purity as He who declares the heavens impure in His sight, and who charges His angels with folly, before whom the illuminate Seraphim veil their faces; to walk with such a God, requires righteousness in character, purity in life, holiness in heart, and harmony in views, and union in feeling, of no ordinary extent or degree. Until this moral change in man is produced, he can hold no communion with his Maker, nor his Maker with him. But who, as God smiles upon him, would not exclaim, and especially, as God calls him into His presence, and invites him to hold communion with Him—" Who is a God like unto *Thee*, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy;" "for He will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depth of the sea." Thus he removes by His mercy our guilt and moral pollution, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and none, till they are thus cleansed and washed and purified, can walk with Him.

II. Walking with God implies *active faith* in Him.

" By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God translated him; for *before* his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God." " But without faith," we are told by the apostle, " it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to Him must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him." His creating goodness demands it. He has made us *intelligent*, *thinking*, *choosing*, *reasoning beings*. With all the goodness he has caused to pass before us, and the attributes of His nature emblazoned on the heavens, and every where written on the earth, were we to overlook Him, or fail to recognize His lofty and sublime perfections in their resplendant manifestation in the material universe, we should richly deserve His indignation and wrath, and our unbelief against such a flood of testimony would be the very incarnation of guilt and wickedness. His preserving mercy demands the exercise of unlimited faith in Him. He has sustained us for the very purpose of our confidence and honorable trust in Him. What a bright example Enoch has set us! Our faith, like his, should be unwavering; it should be as living and as operative, and as glorious in its results.

III. Walking with God implies a *conformity to His character*, *an obedience to His will, and a delight in His way.*

God has but one way, uniform, unchanging, and eternal, in which He moves, and this way He has revealed to us in His word. Every soul, therefore, found in this way, is found in company with God. It is a high way, a holy way, a safe way—it is cast up in this waste wilderness by the wisdom and the love of God, for all His redeemed to pass over to the promised land. It is the way of prayer, of holiness, of justice, of mercy, of humility, and of love; and yet, " these are but parts of His way, and how small a portion of Him is known."

Christian, are you in this way, and now walking with God like Enoch? Then are you a just man—a holy man, an humble man, a righteous man, a benevolent man, a praying man, for these are God's way. He is only found in them. If these strong moral principles do not characterize your life and actions, you cannot " walk with God," nor enjoy the light of His countenance, nor the communion of His spirit, nor the fellowship of His Son. But, " blessed is that people that know the joyful sound, and that walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, for in thy name shall they rejoice, and in thy name shall they be exalted." He shall direct the paths of all those who acknowledge Him, and make even the munition of rocks their defence, and cause their bread to be abundant, and their water to be sure.

My dear, impenitent hearers, have you ever walked with God? Do you not even now fear him exceedingly? O, if you were wise, you would not permit this unmeasured alienation to exist between God and your own souls. You would seek a reconciliation before the judgment of the great day shall irrevocably fix your eternal destiny. Will you not do it? The piety of Enoch most likely commenced early in life—where and when the piety of every one should begin. And were all parents as faithful as Jared with Enoch, piety would be vastly more common in families than it now is. What sight on earth can equal the fervent manifestation of piety in the youthful heart? "A flower that's offered in the bud is no vain sacrifice." "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." My young friends, you never will find a better or more convenient time to make your peace with God, than now. You can ask for no more aids, or means, or opportunities, than God grants you now. Earlier habits are more easily formed, and when formed, are the most permanent and abiding. "It is good," says Jeremiah, "it is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth."

Enoch was a man of great piety more than 300 years. How clearly are we taught that the pleasures of religion never *cloy*, but grow with their growth, and increase with their increase! Said David—"Thy loving kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise *Thee*. Thus while I live I will bless Thee. I will lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips."

Enoch sustained this religious character as a father, and the head of a numerous family. Piety is a promoter of every social virtue—a sanctifier of every domestic relation—a strengthener of every pure affection. There is no relation in life more favorable to piety than that of a husband and a father—neither is there any relation where piety is so much needed. Children copy the example of their parents so thoroughly, that parents are said to live in their children. If there is a family on earth that excites my sympathies, and for whom I feel an intense interest, it is that family in the midst of whom there stands no family altar, and where the voice of thanksgiving and of praise is never heard—where no confessions are made for sin—no mercies asked—no pardon sought—no grace invoked. Better ten thousand times dwell in a roofless house, amid descending storms, with God's presence and protection, than in houses of cedar, on which the frown of heaven rests. How sublime was the purpose of Joshua, for himself and his house to serve the Lord, compared with that carnal and worldly ambition of Bonaparte, to make his family kings and nobles. Better, said an old heathen, to raise the souls of our children, than the roofs of our houses. How patriarchal and priestly, how dignified and noble it looks to see a father gather around him his family, while he calmly, and with seeming confidence and trust, opens God's holy volume, and reads the words of wisdom and spiritual knowledge, while every eye in that little admiring group is turned on him, while the entrance of what he reads gives them understanding—then he kneels down in their midst, and offers for them all that petition which each seems to think and feel his own. They rise, and commence their various duties for the day with consciences calm and tranquil, and with an indefinable sensation of security and peace, as though God was their friend, and He would protect them—their father's friend, and He would save them. Thus felt Enoch, as he walked with God—and thus will feel every saint who imitates Enoch. O may each of you be found—not like *Peter*, following afar off, but like Enoch, "walking with God."

But Enoch was carried bodily into heaven, that glorious, happy, holy place, into which all weary pilgrims will ultimately be received when they have served their generation according to the will of God, and have fallen asleep. And into the same divine and heavenly abode, just twenty-one hundred years afterwards, Elijah was borne in a chariot of fire, and on the whirlwind's wing; and nine hundred years after this again, in majestic sublimity, ascended the Captain of our salvation to the throne of universal dominion in the same lofty heavens, from the field of conflict and of death. Thus, before the law was given, Enoch was taken up to heaven, to show all who lived before the revelation of God was made, the certainty of the resurrection, and of immortality upon it. Then Elijah was taken up to heaven under the law—to represent the resurrection under that legal economy. And then Jesus Christ followed under the Gospel economy to represent that. So that each great period of the world had its representation of a final resurrection, and of a glorious immortality. Multitudes had witnessed the piety of Enoch, and then saw him depart from the world he had honored, not to the tomb, but to the bosom of God. Multitudes more had witnessed the piety of Elijah, and then, when his pilgrimage was ended, they saw the heavens opened to receive him amid its rushing hosts, and fiery chariots.

And then, again, multitudes more had witnessed the wonderful works of Jesus Christ, and after his Crucifixion, had seen him at the head of principalities and powers, ascend in triumph and in glory, as the first fruits of the resurrection of all the dead. The redemption of the body, therefore, must have been a matter of faith to all the godly, in every age of the world.

But now, dear impenitent hearer, you also will be raised from the dead—and where will you appear? You will surely stand in the judgment—but on which side of the Judge? Your eyes will behold Him as he descends from heaven—but will it be with joy or with grief? There you will see Enoch of whom I have now spoken—there Elijah that followed him on fire and flame—and there you will see Jesus who was marshalled amid unutterable sublimity and grandeur overpowering to that same immortal state;—and there, God grant, for Jesus' sake, you may meet them all "robed in righteousness," and radiant in beauty—fully prepared to participate in the joys which are at God's right hand, and in the pleasures which are there forevermore.

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SERMON DCXXVI.

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THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS.[*]

"For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified."—1 COR. ii. 2.

THE Apostle Paul was a model preacher. In all that constitutes a wise, faithful, efficient and successful minister of the gospel, he stands next to him who "spake as never man spake." One important source of his power is developed in the declaration of the text: "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Not more at Corinth than everywhere else, from the moment he bowed his soul to Christ, on the plains of Damascus, till his work on earth was finished, this language expressed his governing purpose.

Fitted by natural gifts and by liberal study to apprehend more fully perhaps than any other man ever did, what is implied in such a purpose, when Christ was revealed to him and in him —when he grasped the *great thought* wrapped up in the words "*Christ crucified*," it filled his whole being and absorbed all his energies. He bowed beneath its weight, saying—it is enough. Let this one idea fill my soul and govern my life. To study it, to fathom it, to preach it, this, by the grace of God, shall be my one business while I live. If I may know this, I desire to know nothing else—I need to know nothing else. Thence, onward, that glorious truth was to the Apostle, not his guiding polar star, but the central *sun*, in whose light he pressed on his heavenly way. It was the very atmosphere he breathed—the vital element of the life he lived. Filling all his heart, and sent in full and strong pulsations through every limb and muscle of the frame, it made him a living, earnest, mighty man.

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Was Paul herein the model for the preacher of our own day? In the progress of ages and the march of intelligence, in this day of intense mental action and of fearless plunging into the profoundest depths of philosophy, is there not devolved some other thought, better fitted to be the one idea of the preacher's life, than that old theme of the Apostle Paul? Does not our philosophy demand some other? Does not the upheaving of old foundations warn us that we must re-construct on new principles? Does not the tremendous pressure of the world upon the church instruct us that a mightier weapon of defence is needed? Does not the unequalled progress of the age justify the presumption that, if the ministry still cling to the old idea of Paul, they must fall behind the times, and lose their power over the people? Or if a new theme be not adopted, is it not at least due to the age that a new dress be sought in which to present the vererable theme, so as to make it more attractive than we are wont to make it?

Questions of this sort have suggested the subject of discourse on this occasion. They call upon us, as intelligent men, acting in behalf of great interests and with reference to permanent results, to examine our weapons, to review our principles of action, and to justify them to ourselves and to the world. The propriety of such a purpose as Paul expressed, depends on the question whether this theme be broad enough for all the exigencies of the ministry, and comprehensive enough to include the whole range of study which the minister needs to fit him for his work?

THE COMPREHENSIVENESS, then, OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CROSS, is our theme.

I. I begin with *its comprehensiveness in Theology.*

The beautiful Bible figure concerning the relation of Christ to the church is equally applicable to the system of truth of which the church is the pillar and the ground.

Jesus Christ is the *chief corner-stone*—tried, elect, precious. But, more than this—that is a *living stone;* having life, and giving life; so that they that are built upon it, are living also; and so that the whole building, fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, "*groweth in him* into an holy temple in the Lord." Such is the relation of the doctrine of the cross to the entire system of divine truth, necessitating its form and development, giving symmetry, beauty, life and power to the whole.

It is a beautiful idea of Neander, though very unsound and unsafe, that the doctrine of a crucified Saviour—a doctrine that could come only from God, and is therefore inspired—furnishes a test by which to determine what portions of the sacred volume are inspired and what are not. Every thing that unfolds and impresses the Christian idea is, like that idea itself, inspired. The Christian consciousness of the regenerated man, in quick and lively sympathy and affinity with these truths, readily detects them, and separates them for its own use, as the magnet attracts the iron filings from out the mass of dust, and thus safely applies the test of inspired Scripture.

Rejecting utterly this theory of inspiration, both in its philosophy and in its application, we might yet say with truth that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost goes through the records of this sacred book *along with* the life-giving power of the cross of Christ; and then add, that there is not a branch, nor a twig, nor a leaf, that is not made comely and vigorous and green by the vital current from the living vine, and therefore that it is in whole and in every part the inspired word of God.

We can only glance a moment at a few of the relations of this truth to the system of theology. *Who was* Jesus Christ? God manifest in the flesh, or a created being? At what a measureless distance asunder do the different answers to these questions at once reveal men to be, in all their views of God and of man;—of human character and human hopes. The divinity of Christ involves at once the tri-unity of the Godhead, the mystery of the incarnation, and the unfathomable depths of the infinite intelligence. *Why* was the Son of God crucified? This question brings before us on the one hand the fact and the nature of the moral government of God, the nature of Justice as an attribute of God, and as an attribute of his law; the nature of right and wrong, of freewill and conscience: and involves, directly and indirectly, the profoundest questions of morals and of mental science. It points us on the other to the condition of those for whom the sacrifice was made, and involves the question of the *fall* as a tremendous fact of human history, and the influence of that event upon Adam and upon his posterity. Depravity, imputation, the nature of sin, original and actual, the whole group of correlated topics, assume their positions, and aspects and bearings, in accordance with the answer to this question. Nay more, this question sweeps back into the ages of a past eternity, involving the covenant of Redemption and the eternal, sovereign and immutable decrees of Jehovah; and it opens to our study those depths which no human mind has penetrated, in which lie hid the reasons for the divine permission of sin, the immediate sentence of fallen angels, and yet the institution of a new probation for fallen man. The *results* of the death of Christ in respect to *individuals*, involve the nature and necessity and fruits of Regeneration by the Spirit; the extent of human ability and obligation, both before and after regeneration; the relations of the regenerate to the Redeemer in this life, and the ground of their security of life eternal. The results of the atonement on other beings and other worlds, unveil to us the future with its dread and glorious realities of resurrection, judgment, heaven and hell. They unveil to us the relation of this life to another, and of this scene of probation and redemption to the government of God over other intelligences, and throughout eternity; "when unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, shall be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Thus the doctrine of the cross may be seen to be the vital element of the whole system of Christian truth. It is the head from which the whole body, having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Without it, the collections of doctrines this volume contains, these specimens of poetry and eloquence, these sublimest conceptions of the human mind, are like pearls scattered on the ocean's bed, without order, without design, comparatively without value. The mind that attempts to study the system, whatever other ideas it may have, if it have not grasped this one all-pervading idea, will study in vain and grope in darkness, as the blind man gropeth for the wall. But, on the other hand, this one truth correctly apprehended and cordially received, not only are all the rest in an important sense involved and made necessary, but the greatest obstacles to the reception of all the rest are overcome or removed.

The Saviour alluded to this idea when in reply to Peter who had nobly avowed his faith in Christ, saying, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Paul uttered the same testimony, in his first letter to the Corinthians: "No man can say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Holy Ghost;" and John uses the truth to mark the dividing line between the regenerate and the unregenerate; "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." The very idea of the *Incarnation of Deity*, and especially, incarnation of Deity for the purpose of an *atoning death in behalf of humanity*, when men look at it as a matter of speculation, so outstretches the boundaries of human reason, so staggers human faith, that in its fullest sense, certainly in all its meaning, in all its precious relations to human wants, no man can receive it but by the Holy Ghost. When one's mind attempts to grasp the idea of the infinite, when he thinks on the one hand, of the Maker and Sovereign of all worlds and all beings, in his boundless and eternal dominion, and on the other, what is involved in his becoming *flesh*, to dwell among us for the suffering of death, the mystery of incarnation is so utterly impenetrable, the condescension is so amazing, the love so inconceivable, the sacrifice so stupendous, that nothing short of the clearest affirmations of the infinite God himself can, or ought to lodge it firmly in the confidence of the human mind. But when this is done—when the soul bows to receive, as it must, this truth from the pen of inspiration, not only does it receive the whole system of gospel truth, fastened to this by logical necessity, but it is prepared to receive any and every truth, which that same authority may unfold. It implies a surrender, to be led by *faith* in divine teaching, into regions which reason cannot penetrate. It is just the surrender that prepares him to gaze "on the mysterious splendors of the cross, and not be proud. His heart within him is like a little child's, while yet the mind is filled with images of surpassing glory, and might, and love."

II. *Its comprehensiveness in history.*

This world is given to Christ. He is promised here a seed to serve him, that he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. "There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." For the establishment of this kingdom, the government of this world is on Christ's shoulder. All power in heaven and earth is his, and in his infinite wisdom he is working out his benevolent and glorious designs. Human depravity makes it a slow, and oftentimes an exceedingly painful process. Great lessons, embodying the principles of the divine government, and of individual and national well-being, must be so taught, reiterated and impressed, that they shall be deeply imbedded in the thoughts and purposes and plans of men, and become at length the acknowledged and abiding principles of human conduct. But so averse is the human heart to these truths of God, that no teacher but *experience*, protracted, perpetuated, and often most painful experience, by means of which they shall be inwrought into the very being and life of men and nations—no teacher but experience can fasten them firmly upon the mind. Facts might be presented indefinitely, did time permit, illustrating the principle that Christ is inweaving, and that on a vast scale, and by the agency, in no small part, of wicked men and nations themselves, Christ is inweaving into the permanent texture, and into the very being of human society, the great moral lessons which alone can prepare the way for the complete establishment of that kingdom, which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And this process must go on, while man's resistance to the truth makes it necessary. Walls that have stood for ages must be battered down, and triple plates of brass which ignorance and superstition have nailed and welded to protect the hearts of men from the truth, must be cleft asunder. As of old God declared to his people, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee," "since thou art precious in my sight, and honorable, and I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life," so will it be still. Despotisms will be overthrown, and republics shaken. God will overturn, till he whose *right* it is shall reign; and He will write on the great canvas of human history, in letters of ever-growing brightness, as fold after fold shall be unrolled down to the end of time, "*Righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a reproach to any people. The kingdom and nation that will not serve God shall perish.*" The church of God standing by the cross, may look out calmly upon these commotions; and her work is, not to throw fuel into the flames—the passions of the wicked will do this—but to pour the light of truth and love into the darkness, and point this sin-distracted world to the Lamb of God.

The cross of Christ furnishes the only position, from which to read this world's history aright. To the observer from any other position, it is but the record of advances and recessions, marches and counter-marches, victories and defeats, without definite progress, without order, without end or aim. To the christian observer looking out from the cross of Christ, it is the record of the conflicts of error with truth, of rebellious mind with moral law; and the record of the majestic movements of the King of kings, going forth through the ages and through the nations to recover to himself this revolted province, and establish his kingdom "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." The cross, as the standpoint of history, gives to the eye at once the sweep of the entire circle, from the moment of the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, down to the final consummation, when "the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all." It gathers up and arranges the minutest as well as the most important events, and interweaves them all into the vast and wondrous plan of that mighty mind which is working out for the inspection of the universe, and for his own glory, the problem of human redemption and of moral government.

III. *Comprehensiveness in philosophy.*

Philosophy looks into the reason of things. It seeks to *account for* facts, to explain them, to discover the thread that binds them together, and gives them harmony and consistency. It is folly to declaim against it, for every man is and must be a philosopher

It is just as natural for a man to frame to himself *some* theory in explanation of the *facts* he observes, as it is to take cognizance of the facts. This he will do in religion as well as any where else. There are cravings of his nature, in this respect, that will find satisfaction if possible; and it is not, therefore, a departure from the province of the ministry to regard these cravings and endeavor to satisfy them, or to point out the boundary beyond which reason cannot go, and where the simple "Thus saith the Lord," unexplained and inexplicable, must give rest to faith. The death of Christ is the great central *fact* of this world's history, standing out alone—midway between the extremes—awfully sublime in its elevation and in its mystery.

It is apart from the purposes of the gospel to give lessons in philosophy. This fact, and the group of other facts that are inseparable from it, are recorded for a higher purpose. Indeed, God never teaches philosophy directly, yet his works in ten thousand voices teach it. Every leaf and flower and shrub, every pebble and every shell, as well as every planet and every star, have a voice on this subject. There is a *true* philosophy of spiritual as well as of natural truth. And never can the facts be made to harmonize till that philosophy is discovered and unfolded. Just as in Astronomy, while the philosopher made the earth his centre, the facts of the system were perpetually colliding with his theories, and apparently with one another, so in religious and spiritual truth. The philosopher must first find the true centre of the system, and that centre I am more and more persuaded is to be found only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Locate it wherever else he may, he will find himself continually beating up against that impregnable breastwork of facts of which Christ is the chief corner stone. "The conflict of ages" is not yet settled. Nor will it ever find a settlement in speculations that drive us back into regions which consciousness has never known anything about; or worse yet, into the domain of fallen spirits, who were unhappily brought into being before the power of God to govern moral agents was sufficiently developed to keep them from falling! The waves of conflicting opinion will continue to surge on either side, till some mightier central attraction be brought to bear upon them. That attraction, if it be found at all, we are constrained to believe must be found in the deep, unfathomable counsels of Jehovah concerning his Son; through whom it has come to pass that the whole human family since the fall, are not under law but under grace; that the facts to be accounted for, and to be reconciled with our convictions of honor and right, are facts taking place under a redemptive and not a legal system; under a system in which the name of Christ Jesus is exalted above every name, and "where sin hath abounded grace shall much more abound."

But further, where can we find such light, respecting the nature of moral government, the nature of sin and guilt, and the condition of the fallen mind, in respect to dependence on the one hand, and capacities and obligations on the other? Where can we find such light on themes like these, as in the fact that such a stupendous sacrifice was offered to make forgiveness possible, and to make it consistent that omnipotent divine agency should be employed to lift up the soul from the paralysis of sin, and bear it on in its conflicts and struggles for a better life—and yet that soul itself be laden with the terrible responsibilities of the issue? How unsatisfactory must be every system of mental philosophy, and especially of the philosophy of the will, which overlooks on the one hand the fact of sin, and that not an individual, isolated fact, but a fact of *humanity*—a fact that as really links them all together and all to the first man as humanity itself does; or which overlooks, on the other hand, the equally significant fact that the dominion of sin in the soul is overthrown and destroyed by means of the great doctrines of the cross of Christ in the hands of the Holy Ghost. The gospel system is made for man—intended to meet the actual necessities of his condition. The best possible guide, then, to the knowledge of that condition, both in its primal excellence and its present degradation, must be furnished by what God has done to meet its necessities. While we say, then, unhesitating that the ministry must not abjure philosophy—their people will not if they do—we must add that they may descend into its deepest recesses with perfect safety, if they will consent to be guided by the light of the cross, and not attempt to go beyond it.

IV. *Comprehensiveness in adaptations to the immediate necessities of the ministry.*

In this more practical view of the subject, I might speak of its adaptations to develop in the ministry that sturdy intellectual growth, and that sturdy, energetic piety which the times specially demand. But I choose to pass these, and speak only of the three following topics: (1) Its adaptation to the peculiar *spirit* of the age; (2) to the ends of moral reform, and (3) to the special mission of the ministry, viz.: the conversion of souls to Christ, and the sanctification of the church.

1. Adaptations to the Spirit of the Age.

That the ministry must in important respects conform itself to the changing spirit of the times is obvious enough. Reverence for the clergy as such, has entirely disappeared from among us, and it is well that it has, never to return. Now if we would move men, we must grapple with them on their own ground, and substantially in the way that other men do. In a high and solemn sense, ministers must be *men of the times*. We can not wield such armor as our fathers wielded. Those massive piles of theology in the shape of sermons, built up in solid masonry, with buttresses and pillars, and breastworks, with monstrous porticoes and huge, dark corridors, piled up too, story upon story, tower upon tower, are noble monuments of the industry and patience of the times. They stand in our libraries to be explored, like old baronial castles, full of the armory of war and the trophies of victory. We sometimes carry away an old battle-axe and re-cast it into a lighter form; but what could we do with those sermons themselves in our modern pulpits? The ministry has been affected as much as it ought in this matter by the spirit of the times, and now it is stoutly maintained that we must take another step—our very *themes* are obsolete. The material itself we use is too heavy. We must take instead the popular topics of the day. We must attract men to the house of God, and keep them there by means of those practical themes in which they are so deeply interested. Is it so? What is the spirit of the age, and what its demands upon the ministry? Look at it as an age of *progress*. Such it surely is, in many respects of unparalleled and fearful progress. In all that pertains to the development of the physical—in the waking up of the human intellect—in radicalism, political, moral, theological—such an age of progress has never been seen.

What do the exigencies of this progressive period demand at our hands? Not surely additional stimulants—not surely a heavier pressure of the moving force, but *guidance*, guidance to a safe result; the pressure of a heavy hand upon the helm. At other times, the work of the ministry has been to arouse the torpid and slumbering, to infuse life and energy, and for such a work the doctrines of the cross have been found mighty through God. They waked up the energies of the Wittenberg reformers, and gave to all Europe an impulse onward and upward, not yet expended, and we believe never to be expended, till the glory of the Lord shall fill the earth; an impulse that enters in no trifling measure into the sum of influences which have produced the very state of things in the midst of which we live. Are those doctrines adequate to the new demands which this state of things has created? That elements of progress, belong to the gospel, history has demonstrated. We need not tarry here to explain in what these elements consist. Our great concern now is, to know whether there is power to regulate and guide that progress to an end worthy of man, and well pleasing to God. It is an easy thing to guide while the momentum is yet but small—but who will put his hand to that loaded train, loosened from its fastenings and leaping down yonder inclined plane?

And I confess, that when I look at the work to be done by the church in these exigencies, I am oppressed with its awfulness, its magnitude, its difficulty. When we think of the mighty mass of mind, now awakened to its intensest action; think of the immeasurable power of the press now stimulating that mind to the utmost; think of the intense, absorbing pressure of secular business, tasking to the utmost the physical and mental energies of the nation, sweeping into its current almost the entire ranks of the young men, the hope of the country and the church, and sweeping away upon its bosom the wreck of early hopes, of Christian principles, and of vows to God;—think too, that the end of all this action, toward which all this current is sweeping—the end for which every shuttle flies, and every furnace burns, and every furrow is turned—the end for which every steamer and sail plow the deep, and the iron horse rushes across the land; the end for which the lightning speaks and the press re-echoes its utterances; the end for which cabinets plan and senates legislate, and the whole machinery of government is managed—the end for which diplomacy is conducted, war is declared, and human blood poured out like water—the end is none other than Mammon, the god of this world. When we think that all our boasted progress is but rushing down the steep toward such an end; nothing higher, nothing nobler, nothing better; and when we think that the work of the church is to grasp the helm, and turn the mighty moving mass heavenward, and Godward,—the question returns upon us with amazing interest, What are the sources of her *power* for such an undertaking? It is vain, in these circumstances, to appeal to moral precept and the lessons of prudence and economy—vain to point to the beacon lights of past history, vain to trust to national faith and compromises and treaties. All such influences will avail no more than cobwebs across the path of the locomotive. Nothing can avail, till there be a higher *end* of progress, and this end be so lifted up and magnified in its importance and its authority as to *command* the eye and interest the heart, and fill the soul of the man and the nation, until everything else is eclipsed by it. What can do this? Not the naked doctrine of immortality; not the thunders of violated law. I turn in despair from these and from every other source of power to the cross of Christ, and bid this maddened world stop and gaze upon that monument of God's wisdom and love—standing alone "amid the lapse of ages and the waste of worlds." From that cross speaks the infinite God to tell what immortality is *worth*, what *is* the power of an endless life.

The amazing *fact* of the death of the Son of God upon the cross lifts up the great end to which all true progress must aim —infinitely above every thing else conceivable—and magnifies it, as an interest which, in God's esteem infinitely exceeds all other interests besides. If there is power anywhere to guide the intense activity of the age, it must be found here. The ministry can be fitted for its work in this age, only where this great truth shall so possess their souls, so infuse into their very being the *spirit* and the life of the cross, and give such intensity and enlargement to their apprehension of divine realities, that they shall know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and him crucified. The church can be fitted to conflict with the temptations that so heavily press upon her, and to be the light of the world, only by being buried with Christ in baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should walk in newness of life.

2. *Adaptations to the ends of moral reform.*

The church as a reforming agent seeks, or should seek, to lay the foundation of an improved state of morals in the man and in the community, *deep* in sound moral principle; an abiding, permanent change for the better, that will endure temptation, opposition and reproach—to build a house upon the rock that neither wind nor flood can shake. Nothing else in this regard is worth her seeking. To such reform all the tendencies of the gospel conspire. It relies not on external fastenings to a life of decency, but on the renovation of the central power of the soul. It attempts not to dispossess the strong man armed by violence, nor by legislative enactments and judicial authority, but what Chalmers has so expressively termed the expulsive power of a new affection; it makes better states by making better men; and makes better men by making better *hearts.*

There is no evil under the sun that it is not fitted to grapple with and overcome—no work of the devil that Christ cannot subdue. It comes to men, entrenched in evil habits, wrapped up in prejudice and girt for resistance to all manner of force; it comes in the melting accents of the Son of God, and speaks of the great love wherewith he loved our guilty race; it comes like the mid-day sun, melting away prejudice, disarming resistance, unloosening all bands, and pouring its own heavenly spirit into the very heart. Faithfully applied and honestly received, the doctrines of the cross must work the cure of every individual and every social wrong which we deplore. It has no magic force to heal diseases to which it is not applied, to remedy evils which it is not permitted to reach; but let it be faithfully brought in contact with any evil system, in the kindness of a heart full of the sympathies of Christ, and a blessed result, under God, is certain.

The process may be slow, too slow for this fiery age. Permanent changes in society are always slow, and in the very nature of moral causes must be slow. Changes which involve the reformation of all our tastes and appetites, of all our habits of thought and feeling, and which involve, also, the re-construction of society—changes, too, of this kind, which are expected to be permanent—can not be the work of a day or a year, nor on a large scale, the work of a generation, unless effected by miracle. The eternal verities of the gospel, which must be the foundation of such changes, must not only be correctly taught and apprehended, but their very fibre must be inwrought into the bone and muscle of the man, and the race, and the spirit of them, must possess their whole being. No shorter way is possible, if we would not have all our work undone before we have finished it, and be buried ourselves in its ruins.

I question not the propriety of calling in the aid of the civil arm in respect to evils which run into the sphere of human legislation; but if we *rely* upon that arm instead of relying on the great truths of the gospel, made effectual by the Holy Ghost, we abandon Jehovah, to trust in Assyria, and the sword on which we lean shall pierce through our own hand. An unchecked under current of moral corruption will sooner or later wear away all the foundations of your legislative enactments, and sweep every vestige of them from the statute book. I know not by what lessons God may teach his Church to trust not in man, neither to put confidence in princes, in respect to any work she has to do; but to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified. Yet I cannot doubt she is to learn it in some way effectually and speedily.

3. Adaptations to the special mission of the preacher, viz., the conversion and sanctification of men.

It was for this reason alone that Paul made it his undivided business to preach the doctrines of the cross. The theme was a stumbling block to the Jew and to the Greek foolishness—but to those who are saved it was the power of God and the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God is it, not only in its display of a plan of redemption, which none but the infinite intelligence could devise or fully comprehend, but in its adaptations of means to the immediate end for which the gospel is preached? For the accomplishment of the mightiest work that can be wrought in the human soul, it furnishes the mightiest, the sublimest truth made known to human intelligence. Slighter changes may be made by feebler means; changes of opinion, changes of pursuit, changes of social relations, changes of public profession—all that is superficial may be reached by means of the ordinary forms of truth—of every day's observation. But when it is sought to descend to the very bottom of the soul, to upturn the very foundations of character, and reconstruct the whole, so that to all moral intents and purposes there shall be a *new man*, old things passed away, and all things become new; and this to be done, in accordance with the laws of free intelligence, an instrument must be used that will cleave through one's being, dividing asunder the soul and spirit, the joints and the marrow, and laying bare the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Just such is the doctrine of the cross. The death of the Son of God to atone for sin, and lift up fallen man from his degradation and ruin, demonstrates, as nothing else can demonstrate, the depth of human guilt, the completeness of man's ruin by sin, the worthlessness of all superficial renovations; and at the same time, it throws in upon the soul the inspiring stimulus furnished by the worth of the soul, and the possibility of its restoration, in the assurance of heaven's interest and love and infinite power, drawn forth and pledged for its help. It tears away, on the one hand, all the foundations of hope which are found in the natural man, presenting in their place the everlasting *rock* on which he may build and rest secure; breaking up his confidences in every human arm, and reaching forth in sympathy and tenderness the arm of Omnipotence itself. It has been forcibly said, "that which man goes through to be regenerated to God, opens depths in the soul, down which, not only had he never looked before, but which, till then, had been unthought-of regions. The stillness which had brooded there is broken. Far, far down, deep is calling unto deep, and the waters of the dead sea move. O, if man would know something of that truly shoreless ocean, the soul—something of those caves which no line has fathomed—and feel the power of the Spirit which is moving there, let him see and feel himself a sinner before the Almighty God. If thou wouldst know the infinite capacity of thy nature, O man, feel thyself a worm, and less than a worm, before thy God. To hear one prate of the light of reason and the dignity and perfectibility of his nature, who has never felt the searchings of conviction, and the agonizing throes of sin, how gaudy, how poor, how *sad* it is. What does such a man know of those depths out of which a redeemed one is come, or of the height and grandeur to which he is ascending?" The instrument by which at once the soul's vileness and worth is thus laid open is the doctrine of the cross. And it is worthy of note here, how in the facts of Christian experience, this simple truth that Christ died for man, is honored above all truth besides.

We have our various theories about the atonement, which we sometimes take with us into the pulpit. They may contribute to relieve our own or other minds of difficulties; but, let it be remembered, our theories are not objects of Christian faith. The soul of the believer rests not on them but on the living personal Christ, the Almighty Saviour. The faith that justifies the soul heeds not your questions of a limited or a general atonement, nor your speculations about imputation, and satisfaction, and equivalents, and the like. It asks not *how* can Christ save, but *can* he save. What is the testimony of God concerning his Son? Is he the Almighty Saviour, able and ready to save unto the uttermost? It overleaps all minor questions, and brings the soul at once to Christ crucified, for rest. Hence, Paul declared to the trembling jailor, in answer to that most thrilling question that ever sprung from human lips, "What shall I *do* to be saved." Paul declared. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Hence, also, from that day to this, wherever *Christ crucified* has been preached, under whatever forms of theology, from the highest Augustinian to the lowest Arminian, that preaching has been effectual to bring men to God. And everywhere, all men alike, as well the Calvins, the Newtons, and Edwardses, as the unlettered Greenlander and Hottentot, all alike, have bowed their spirit to the cross, and rested for eternity on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty Atoning Redeemer. And at the same time, simple as is the story of the cross, there is in it a depth of meaning so unfathomable, a comprehensiveness so vast and immeasurable, that the daily communion of the minister's soul with it, in his study and in his closet, is fitted above all things to give depth and power to his thinking and energy to his preaching—fitted to fire his soul with ardor in his work, a "woe is me if I preach not the gospel," which no discouragements or trials can dampen. O, how it fired the soul of the Apostle, when, in view of the fact of Christ's death, he looked out upon a *world dead in sin*, whose recovery and salvation is made possible by the blood of Christ! Men who had not learned the secret power that wrought within him, looked upon his career with amazement, and called him insane. But this he heeded not. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, and whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us."

Such are the men whom God in every age has most highly honored, as instruments in the conversion of souls; men, who like Whitefield and Wesley, and Tennent and Davies, and Nettleton, knew nothing among men, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Having won many to righteousness, they shine as the stars in the firmament forever and ever. Blessed is that church to whom God gives such a ministry.

He then, that like Paul, purposes to know nothing but Christ crucified, does not thereby limit himself to a narrow sphere of life; he does not cramp his mind, by fastening it to one narrow round of duty and study. The farthest from it, possible. As he devotes himself to Him whose name is above every name, so he devotes himself, his being, to the one work of fathoming and unfolding and impressing the one idea, which is above every other idea revealed to man; most sublime, most comprehensive, most mighty, vast enough for an angel's study through eternity; mighty enough to justify his reliance upon it under God, to accomplish all the purposes of his office.

Fathers and Brethren of the General Assembly:

At the close of another ecclesiastical year, under the care of the great Head of the Church, we are gathered here, from our various fields of labor, to mingle our sympathies and prayers, and to inquire what we can do to promote the interests of our common Zion. It is not for me to designate the particular topics of our inquiry, nor to indicate the specific results we should endeavor to secure. But may I not remind you that we all meet in these assemblies never but once. What we do may be reviewed in other assemblies, but we ourselves shall never all meet to review it till we stand before the throne of God. I see before me but few of those with whom I was called to act a year ago. Most of them are yet in the field, but some have fallen asleep. It becomes us, therefore, to act on this occasion as in full view of the solemnities of eternity. We are reminded, too, by the history of each year, as it passes, that our time is short, and what we have to do for Christ we must do quickly. I cannot speak of all whom God hath taken from the number of our ministry the past year; but there are three of whom I cannot doubt you will permit me to speak for one moment, especially since they illustrate the truths I have endeavored to present.

There are few men who have been the means, in the hands of God, of the conversion of more souls to Christ than the late Rev. JAMES GALLAHER, of Missouri. In Tennessee, his native State, in Kentucky, in Ohio, in Illinois and Missouri, not to speak of transient labors in this eastern portion of the field, his labors in the pastoral office, but pre-eminently in revivals, for nearly forty years, have been abundant and greatly successful. His plain, clear, and earnest presentation of the great truths of the gospel, and especially of the plan of redemption, told with amazing effect upon his hearers. In the "big meetings," so called, of the west, few have been so popular, or wielded so much power. He was eminently at home in them. He loved their sacred songs. He loved beyond all things to point the inquirer to the Lamb of God. The call from Heaven to come up higher found him in his favorite work, with the harness on, and appointments out, yet to be fulfilled. The call was sudden, unexpected, but he was ready. The mercy of God in Christ on which he had rested in life, gave him repose in death. The 103d Psalm, and the 53d chapter of Isaiah, always favorite portions of scriptures with him, were peculiarly expressive and precious then. They speak of the mercy of the Lord from everlasting to everlasting, through Him that was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. As this had been the great theme of his preaching, so was it the source of his joy and triumph in the hour of dissolution.

From another and a very different sphere of labor, and yet one most intimately connected with the enlargement of the borders of our Zion, and the salvation of souls, the excellent and beloved CHARLES HALL has been called to his rest. Familiar, from its earliest beginnings, with our Home Missionary cause, in its general plans and in its minutest details, with a mind fitted to appreciate the magnitude of the enterprise, with a heart that responded to its very centre to the cry of the needy, with wisdom to plan, and energy to execute rarely equalled, with a soul so filled with the love of Christ as to make him entirely impartial in the management of possibly conflicting interests, toiling for twenty-seven years with unsparing faithfulness, in weariness and painfulness often, in afflictions, in anxieties, in sicknesses, until at length the overtasked frame gave way—the silver cord was loosed, and the pitcher broken at the fountain; it is not strange that the intelligence of his death vibrated painfully through the heart of the Church, and especially through the hearts of those who have been the special objects of his prayers and labors throughout the Home Missionary field. It is not for us to measure the relative influence of men in different departments of labor; but no one can doubt that, though never filling the pastoral office, yet, considering his connection with the vast work of supplying the destitute throughout the land with an evangelical ministry, and considering too his eminent qualifications for the office he filled so long, few if any can have accomplished more for the cause of Christ than he. Seldom has there been exhibited a more striking example of what an undivided purpose and an eye single to the glory of God will enable a man to accomplish.

Your thoughts, my brethren, anticipate me as they turn to the office in this Assembly made vacant by death. Dr. E. W. GILBERT held the office of Permanent Clerk of the Assembly from the memorable era of disruption, 1838, to his death. Long will his memory be cherished by all that knew him. We love to speak of his kindness and patience, of his promptness and fidelity, of his deep solicitude and earnest love for the Church of his affections, her order, her doctrines, her peace and her prosperity. I must be permitted in this public manner to express my own personal obligations for the timely suggestions of his riper experience, in the discharge of the duties to which I was called by the last Assembly. But it is to his language, in immediate view of death that I call your especial attention. If I ever preach again, is his language, I will *preach Christ more.* I have preached too much to the intellect, too little to the heart. Thus to us all, will this work of preaching appear, as we look back from the bed of death. Could he have known, when we were about to dissolve the last Assembly, in a few months his work on earth would be at an end, I doubt not he would have arrested our proceedings by an appeal which would have thrilled our every heart.—Brethren, *preach Christ more!* And now from that bed of death he speaks to us in the earnestness of a soul that was seeing earthly things in the light of eternity, "Brethren, preach Christ more. Know nothing among men, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

SERMON DCXXVII.

BY REV. A. ELMENDORF,

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THE EXCESS OF FUTURE GLORY OVER PRESENT SUFFERING.

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—ROM. viii. 18.

THIS is not the language either of the feelings or of the imagination, but of a faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It was uttered by that remarkable man whom the Son of God constituted a chosen vessel to bear his name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," and respecting whom, he who has all power in heaven and earth, in the day of his conversion, said, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." From that hour to the one when he gave expression to the words before us, embracing a long interval, he trod a path of thorns and stemmed the floods of affliction. His enemies hated and hunted him wherever he went; they treated him like a felon and an outlaw; they waylaid him on his journeys, dragged him before magistrates, stripped and scourged him in public assemblies; heaped on him every indignity, subjected him to every outrage, and inflicted on him every cruelty which a satanic ingenuity could invent or a ferocious hand could execute. Disaster, malevolence, and injury, seemed his heritage,—until, in tracing the record of his griefs, though they had by no means yet reached their consummation, he wrote,—"of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Out of the depths of such an experience, but with a heart lustrous with the hope of immortality, and the blessedness of the eternal future beaming upon his spirit, Paul exclaimed, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The great theme of the chapter from which the text is taken, is the security of the believer,—the validity of his title to eternal life, a statement of the evidences which prove his right to it, and a protracted and glowing argument to show that nothing in all the universe shall exclude him from its possession. Having reached the very climax of the Christian's privileges, in asserting that he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus, the elder-born son, the thought seems to occur to the Apostle's mind, that the afflictions incident to the present condition of the believer, may appear discordant with his exalted destiny, when he, at once, declares the necessity of these afflictions as a prerequisite to the end in question,—in the words, "If so be that we suffer with Christ that we may, also, be glorified together;" and then follows the language of the text,—in our reflections on which, we remark,

I. That the Apostle does not design here to underrate the sufferings of the Christian, either in respect of their real nature or their distressing effects on the present happiness of their subject. He does not mean either to adopt or to affect an unamiable and indurated stoicism, by asserting that pain should not be regarded as such, nor to teach that sorrow is the minister of immediate pleasure. But he institutes a comparison between the afflictions of the faithful disciple and their results, and affirms that the latter so immeasurably exceed the former as to lose any appearance of proportion or correspondence; when thus contrasted they become, as he elsewhere expresses it, "*light*, and are but for *a moment*;" while *these* constitute "a far more exceeding, even an *eternal* weight of *glory*." But let us briefly turn to the sufferings here referred to,—their *character*, *designs*, and *alleviations*.

Whatever of trial or trouble affects the child of God, though by no means peculiar to his calling,—even if it be such as is common to humanity,—because it befalls *him*, exerts a specific influence on him and accomplishes gracious ends with respect to him,—is, in a certain sense, sacred, and becomes Christian suffering. And *here* we see one group of God's anointed in the depths of poverty. We advert not now to those who while the winter's wind sweeps over the northern hills, gather around a blazing hearth, or lie down on an easy and well-covered bed; whose persons are warmly clad and whose table is always supplied with what befits a wholesome and generous appetite; but who yet, it may be from pride and unthankfulness, call themselves poor, because they have not all the luxuries and hoards of the wealthy. No,—we allude to those who, like their Master, have scarcely where to lay their heads; whose thin garments every breeze penetrates; who can tell of bitter nights and days of hunger, and who as the scanty repast of the evening was finished have often grown faint as the child asked, "Father, mother,—what kind hand will bring us bread to-morrow?" There too, as we divide the household of

Christ into classes, we discern a numerous band who all their days struggled against the billows of temptation,—Bunyans, and Tennents, and Paysons, and multitude of lesser name, or of obscure station,—whose conflicts with the powers of darkness no human pen has rendered illustrious, but whose record still is on high, and the least of whom is dearer to God than the pride and the idol of nations. Yonder, is a crowd pale with the sicknesses of months and years, their countenances sombre with disappointments, or their limbs tremulous with the anguish of recurring, and perhaps, utter bereavement. In another part of the congregated body of God's elect, we behold thousands suffering reproach and persecution for his name's sake. We mean not those who by their inconsistencies and sins provoke the disapproval and criminations of their brethren; but those who choose rather to obey God than men; who contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; who worship God in the spirit, and glory in the cross of Christ; who do what conscience bids and live as Heaven commands, in the face of the fulminations of usurped power, the fires of the stake, the horrors of the rack or the scaffold, the sneers of the world, and the hatred of hypocrisy and self-deception, and who, in consequence, because Jehovah has so decreed,—"shall suffer persecution" while the present dispensation endures. Yes—the condition and the law of discipleship is suffering; from some quarter, or in one or another form the earthly lot of the true Christian is sorrow. Exceptions there may be, but these are isolated and singular, while the mass of the believing enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation.

The purposes for which infinite wisdom has instituted this otherwise wholly mysterious arrangement, are to remove from the regenerated heart its idols; to cause it to seek its happiness from, and place its entire trust on its Redeemer; to withdraw its affections from perishable objects and fix them on what is satisfying and eternal; to bring out to the view of others, and to try and invigorate its graces,—polishing the diamond that it may disclose its beauty; passing the gold through the crucible that its own lustre and specific gravity may be shown; pruning and bruising the vine that its clusters may become larger and more abundant; tasking the already well-knit and manly frame, that it may achieve yet higher deeds of strength and endurance; exposing the cedar of Lebanon to a ponderous pressure, that it may strike its roots deeper, and grow the more sturdy and the more noble.

Nor are the people of God left to bear their calamities without consolation or support. They feel confident and assured that if chastisement be ministered to them, the rod is in the hand of a kind and loving Father, and that every stroke is directed by wisdom, moderated by mercy, and designated by beneficence to a gracious end. In every trial, whatever its nature or however severe, they have the pledge of the faithful and true witness,—"My grace is sufficient for thee; as thy days so shall thy strength be; fear not, for I am thy God." They know, too, that their Saviour, who passed through the same struggles, now sits on the eternal throne, and while he sympathizes with his afflicted followers, he will dispense to them all the aid they need that they may glorify him and attain ultimately his blessedness. This world they regard as the theatre of discipline, and these the processes by which they are to be prepared for a bright and lasting future. And from the force of such considerations the Apostle exclaimed,—as many have done after him,—We glory in tribulations, also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

From its issue, therefore, sanctified affliction is greatly profitable; from the gracious alleviations and supports which accompany it, it may become not only tolerable, but the source of high comfort to the soul. Yet to say that pain, and want, and loss, and injury, and blasted prospects, and desolated affections, were in themselves desirable, or that they were productive of pleasure in their legitimate and natural results, would be as discordant with the dictates of a sound philosophy as they are with the principles of a genuine religion. My experience teaches me that

"The flesh will quiver where
The pincers tear;"

that in the day when I became a Christian, I did not cease to be a man; that when a bright earthly hope is blasted; when lover and friend are put far from me, and my companion descends into the darkness of the sepulchre; when frowns and reproaches are heaped upon me; when I seem to be forsaken by man, and it may appear, abandoned by God; when the waves of tribulation swell into a tempest and dash over me on every hand, nothing but a strong faith in the Divine promises, and the sweet glimmerings of the day-star of immortality, can keep me from sinking into that deep sickness of the soul which is full of agony and despair. All my observation shows me that but few have stood firm in the conflicts of a stern and protracted adversity. And I hear a voice from heaven declaring,—"no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." Which leads us to remark,

II. That when contrasted with the blessedness which is to succeed them, the sufferings of the Christian in this life shrink into a shadow and a trifle; "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Here we are the subjects of afflictions *because* we are sinful, and their distressing influence on us is owing to the fact that we are weak, frail, sensitive beings. In the future world, we shall be holy, and the subjects of a happiness which in its intensity and duration shall inconceivably transcend all that we know of sorrow or wretchedness in this.

Who that has stood and gazed upon a gorgeous landscape, bathed in the mellow light of a summer's afternoon; where, for example, beneath a brilliant and variegated sky, was spread out before him a broad expanse of waters,—studded here and there with a picturesque island, skirted by sloping and verdant shores spangled with the cottages of a prosperous yeomanry; and, in the distance, a sombre range of mountains stretching their woody and broken summits along the horizon; who that has walked through the sequestered dell, fragrant with the perfume of the violet, and vocal with the ripplings of the streamlet and the carolings of the springtide songster, has not exclaimed,—*How wonderful are thy works, O God, in wisdom hast thou made them all!* O my Father, if earth be so beautiful, what shall heaven be! Who that has sat beside the old hearthstone in the home of his childhood, when his father and his mother were yet there, while death was a stranger, and separations were not dreamed of, has not, in the fullness of his heart, asked,—If this atmosphere of love be so soft and balmy, and these interchanges and associations so sweet, what shall be my joys in the mansions of the blest, when the household is all gathered, and God himself presides over our felicities? In the investigation of some exuberant subject, has not one glowing truth after another burst upon your perceptions, until your brain kindled and your bosom swelled with the emotions awakened by the attainment; have you not listened to the strains of song as they fell from human lips, and heard the man of gifted mind, as he poured forth his lofty conceptions and piled thought upon thought,—until the pleasure which you experienced from the effort became painfully excessive; and in reflecting on the effects thus produced, has not the inquiry often suggested itself,—If knowledge so limited, and art so imperfect, be capable of ministering such delight to me here, what must it be to drink from the pure fountains of celestial learning, and listen to the voice of angels and saints, as they hymn their rapt praises, or descant on the sublimities of heavenly mysteries! When returning from the communings of the closet, the cherished services of the meeting for prayer, or the holy convocations of the Lord's house, where we had enjoyed a blessedness such as no other companionships or employments could impart,—who of us, in the outgoings of his comfort in the Holy Ghost, has not said,—O my Saviour, if the foreshadowings be so blissful, what shall the substance be; if thy gracious manifestations give such serene peace to the bosom now, what will be the results of thy glorious revealings, when we see thee as thou art, and the smiles of thy visage, once marred for us, fall upon our enraptured and unclouded gaze!

The glory spoken of in the text will, in its *nature*, be such as is adapted to the glorified man. All his faculties will be enlarged and purified and ennobled. His pulses "will beat healthful music," his eye will not tire with seeing, nor his ear with hearing, nor will diversified forms of beauty or sounds of melody be wanting ceaselessly to charm the one or the other. The social affections will find objects for constant and blissful exercise;

"There parted hearts again shall meet,
In union holy, calm and sweet."

The mind will be employed on subjects the most vast and the most interesting. And the soul shall have, in brimming fruition, its satisfying good;—it shall be perfect in holiness, and all its powers and movements shall be pervaded with the contemplation and love of God and the Lamb;—not an unkind look shall distress it; not a fear shall alarm it; not a sinful thought or feeling shall estrange it.

In respect of the *measure* of this glory,—it shall be as much and as great as the capacities of its subject will admit, without by its intensity producing discomfort; and both the capacities and the glory shall, in rapid and unending gradations, be expanded and augmented. It shall, moreover, be eternal in its *duration*. There will be no abatement or termination in the revelations of blessedness to the immortalized saint. Should the stars become so old as to moulder away; should the sun shine so long as to expend all his light and set in blackness, even then the heaven-gathered spirit will have reached only the early morning of its nightless glorification.

Choose now, from yonder white-robed host, the one who was afflicted more than all the sons of earth besides. Let him have been for an hundred, or as the patriarchs for five hundred years, an inhabitant of this sin-stricken world; say that he was born in poverty, brought up in orphanage, and lived toil-worn, and tempted, and persecuted; his frame may have been emaciated all his days with disease, and his very limbs dislocated with protracted and excrutiating pains; he may have seen all who were dear to him heaving their last breath and leaving him to wander lonely and heart-broken; he may have eaten his crusts with tears, and been scorned and derided and cruelly maltreated by all who knew him; he may have dragged out a large portion of his mortal existence amid the chill damps of a prison, and completed it beneath instruments of torture. But in early life he heard the gospel tidings; he became a believer, and in his sorest afflictions he cherished the hope of a better country, and was sustained by the consolations of the religion of the cross. When he died, he was carried by angels to the bosom of Jesus,—and there is his everlasting home. Suppose, that now for fifty years, he has been a denizen of the celestial city, and for all this time, amid those untold glories, his faculties have been developing, and his happiness increasing, as he has been soaring upwards towards the Divinity;—and tell me, whether the extatic joys revealed in him and to him in the brief lapse of one of our days, will not compensate for all his earthly sufferings? Imagine ten thousand years to pass away,—but a needle's point in the immensity of endless ages,—and that once wretched man, will then, doubtless know more and enjoy more than Gabriel does this hour. Consider again, that should the countless orbs in yonder firmament be extinguished one by one, at intervals of a million of years each,—when the last one is put out, he will still be rising higher and higher in felicity, and no nearer to its farthest summit than he is now,—but that the ascent will continue forever and ever;—and then say, "are the sufferings of this present time worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Does the venerable leader and lawgiver of Israel regret now, think you, that he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,—having respect unto the recompense of reward? Does not the Patriarch of Uz, deem you, now bless the day that gave him birth and regard it well that he held fast his integrity when the winds, and the fire, and the sword, and fierce disease, left him bare and in bitterness? Can Daniel otherwise than rejoice that "he prayed to his God as he did aforetime, after the decree was signed," even though he was cast into the den of lions? Did the holy Paul himself conceive the fullness of the meaning of these blessed words when he first uttered them, as he now does? And those sainted witnesses for the faith, who were sawn asunder, and stoned, and put to the sword; the martyrs, who wandered, destitute, afflicted, tormented; they who perished by pitch and faggots, and wild beasts at Rome; they who fell in the streets of Paris on Bartholomew's morning, or who bled in the valleys of the Alps by the hand of the Man of Sin; they who groaned out their life in the dark chambers of the Inquisition, rather than disown their Lord; the ministering servants of God, in all ages the troubled and the tried; the innumerable souls under the altar, who came out of great tribulation, the poor, the friendless, the tempest-tossed here,—do they,—say ye, sanctified palm-bearers, do *ye* "reckon the sufferings of this present time worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us?"

Disciple of Jesus.—"Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,—forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord;" you shall have your reward, though you seem to fail of success. Trials you must have; but see that they are sanctified; seek the shadow of the wings of the Almighty,—and be patient, be patient,—heaven will make amends for the peace and happiness you are denied in this world.

Envy not those who have all their good things in the present life. Let others prefer their ease, and refuse to deny themselves or to make sacrifices for Christ's sake ; but if you are found faithful and endure to the end you shall be saved! If you would wear the crown forever, you must cheerfully, for a brief season, bear the cross.

And to all those who would share this blessedness, let me say in conclusion, that it is freely offered to every one of you, on the simple conditions that you repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,—your compliance with which will be evinced by devotion to his service in a life of faith, and prayer, and good works. And whatever hindrances or trials you may experience in the Christian life, you shall know at last, "That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

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SERMON DCXXVIII.

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THE TWO SIDES.

"Who is on the Lord's side."—Ex. xxxii. 26.

It is not necessary for me to go into any very particular detail of the circumstances in which this question was put to the Israelites. Suffice it to say, that the people were divided into two parties. On the one side, were the worshippers of the golden calf, engaged in offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, and sitting down to eat and drink; and rising up to play, while on the other, were those who continued faithful to the living and true God. Of these two classes the abettors of idolatry were most open and bold, as well as most numerous. As Moses and Joshua came down from the mount, and saw the calf and the dancing, and heard the shouts of the excited multitude, they could be at no loss whatever to determine on which side a vast majority of the people was to be found. So loud and zealous were they as to settle the point at once. But, sad to say, those on the Lord's side appeared far less firm and cordial. For a while they seem indeed to have been borne down by the tide of popular enthusiasm, and it required the well-known voice of their leader and lawgiver, lifted up at the gates of the camp, to recall them to a sense of duty and responsibility.

This was the juncture at which the solemn query was made, "Who is on the Lord's side?" No question could have been more arousing. It must have sent dismay and trepidation into the bosom of the whole host of idolators, while at the same time it so filled with courage the hearts of God's true worshippers that three thousand men immediately stepped forth, sword in hand, ready to avenge the quarrel of his covenant. Indecision was at an end. Well may we pause and contemplate the scene which this instructive portion of the word of God reveals. Did we not know that the human "heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," we could hardly believe that so wide-spread a defection, at such a time, was at all possible. Mount Sinai was in full sight, its thunderings and lightnings had scarcely ceased, and the appalling darkness still lingered on its summit, when the people made a golden calf and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Depravity like this seems almost incredible. It constitutes a dreadful page in the history of a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

Such is a brief outline of the case, as given by the inspired writer. But, my brethren, it is with the solemn and momentous question itself, rather than with the events connected with it, that we, as individuals and as a congregation, are chiefly concerned. What we need to know, above everything else is, whether our hearts are right with God. Let me then take the place of Moses, and ask, "Who is on the Lord's side?" This language implies that there are but *two sides* which can possibly be taken, that every one may ascertain on which of *these sides* he is, and that all ought to be on the *Lord's side*. Give me your serious and prayerful attention, while I present each of these points.

I. *There are but two sides that can possibly be taken.*

Here is a classification of the most simple kind, including the almost endless varieties of the human family, and giving to all their appropriate place. It is one which prevails every where. We find it entering the church and arranging our public assemblies, coming into the neighborhood and dividing the families that live there, and descending to the domestic circle to separate the dwellers under the same roof. Each individual goes, by the operation of this rule, to his own company. All other distinctions of character and position are merged into these two. Were some messenger from the skies to appear among us to-day, with the gift of discerning spirits, and pass along among the occupants of these pews, he would find every man, woman and child, either on the Lord's side or on the side of the world. The very division which appeared at the foot of the burning mountain, exists here. Though not literally and ostensibly separated, there is a real separation. We meet in the same place, sing the same songs, join in the same prayers, and listen to the same sermons, but it is to be feared we are not all on the side of God and truth. No such thing as a third class can exist. How explicit is the language, all that are not for Christ are against him, and such as gather not with him, scatter abroad. There is a side which is emphatically called the Lord's side, including all of every age and name, who have chosen "the good part, never to be taken from them;" and besides this there can be but one other side, embracing those of an opposite character. The matter is too plain to need much elucidation. No voice is heard, as in the desert of Sinai, summoning together such as worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, but there is a line drawn, and all are on one side or the other. The world is divided, and this congregation is divided, and many of our families are divided into two distinct classes. Every man, young or old, high or low, learned or ignorant, rich or poor, bond or free, has his place in God's account, either as a believer or an unbeliever, a saint or a sinner, a friend or an enemy. It is so now, it will be so forever.

Shades of difference may exist among such as belong to each of these great divisions. All true Christians do not see with precisely the same eyes, and owing to peculiarities of education and taste, they cannot all wear the same badge, or sit down comfortably at the same communion table. Nor do all the genuine disciples of the Saviour equal each other in earnest and cordial devotion to his cause. Some follow him afar off. These distinctions too, are found among men in whose hearts the love of God has never been shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Every aspect of religious opinion may be met with here, from the lowest skepticism to the highest speculative orthodoxy, and every grade of conduct from open profligacy to decent and respectable morality. But this by no means proves that there are more than two sides.

Right reason, if suffered to speak out, will teach us thus much. It seems impossible to conceive of men as ranged in any other groups than as reconciled to God or unreconciled, walking in darkness, or children of the light, justified or condemned, in the road to heaven or hell. This is the only vital distinction which the mind can possibly make. There is no neutral position, no blending of parties, no middle class, no state of indifference, none that belong, in fact, neither to one side or the other. The very idea is absurd. Every man on earth is converted or not converted, is an heir of glory or an heir of perdition, and will ultimately receive a crown that fadeth not away, or be consigned to the abodes of despair. Awful as is the statement, it must be made. We should prove recreant to our high trust, and but daub with untempered mortar, to be any less explicit.

In the achievement of our country's independence, sides were taken, and taken necessarily. Some were bolder and heartier for liberty than others, and were ready to do more and venture more, but no one in those times which tried men's souls, deemed that actual indifference was possible. Pretended friends there were, and inactive foes, but every mind had its preference, and was really for resisting or yielding, for independence or submission, for Congress or King. Multitudes did indeed refuse to declare themselves. It was their aim so to steer along between the two contending interests, as not utterly to break with either, and be ready to take advantage of the result, let the scale turn which way it might. But the thing was difficult then, and it is impracticable now. In a business where, not the words nor the professions are mainly concerned, but the heart, it is absolutely impossible to be non-committal.

How do the *Scriptures* represent this matter? Here we learn that, originally, and as men come into the world, they are all on the wrong side, and there they continue until some are translated from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Now, a new interest is set up. A church not of the world, but gathered out of the world, and leaving the world behind, necessitates the existence of two classes; to the one or the other of which every son and daughter of Adam must belong. No third company is known or spoken of from Genesis to Revelation. The distinction at this very moment is as real, though not so palpable, as it will be, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to separate between the righteous and the wicked, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. There are those, we admit, who halt between two opinions. Not a few are almost persuaded to be Christians. A mixed multitude may generally be seen hanging upon the skirts of the camp. Some too are disciples secretly for fear of the world. A sense of unworthiness keeps them away from the Lord's table. Never can they acquire courage enough to be decided. But all this does not prove that there are more than two sides. The early Prophets were surrounded by those who heard and those who forbore to hear. Christ preached to such as listened gladly and such as were filled with indignation. The Apostles found in the same audience, believers and despisers of the great salvation. No third side is spoken of.

Let these remarks reach where they may, and dissever whom they may, make them we must. The marts of trade bring multitudes together in close and frequent contact, and thousands are united by the civilities and courtesies of life, who, nevertheless, are on entirely different sides. Children nursed on the same lap and baptized at the same altar, are often very opposite in feeling and character. Nay, more, it is no strange thing to find that those who are allied together by the strong and tender bonds of conjugal affection, are walking in totally distinct paths, and are going to totally distinct worlds. There are but two sides, and every human being is on one side or the other. If one company be small compared with the other, if Elijah alone has to confront a multitude of false prophets, if only seven thousand can be found in all Israel that have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, and if but few walk in the narrow path, while many throng the broad road, still these constitute a side, and besides, there is but one other. On this subject there is no room for doubt. There is but a single grand distinction in our world, and it is that which subsists between the children of God and the children of the wicked one; those who love and obey the truth, and the workers of iniquity. But,

II. *Every one, if faithful to himself, may ascertain on which side he is.*

The two grand interests into which the world is divided are not only distinct, but absolutely incompatible. So far as all that is acceptable to God is concerned, and all that is saving and experimental in the knowledge of his grace, they have nothing in common. On the one side of the line every one is a follower of God as a dear child, and, on the other, every one is walking according to the course of the present evil world. Each class has its appropriate characteristics, its distinctive dispositions and habits, and these are so marked that all may know where they stand, if not sadly wanting to their own highest welfare. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. It would seem that men *need not* be in the dark on this subject. As all, by nature, are on the side of sin and Satan, a deep and radical change of moral character must be felt, when they come over to the side of Christ and truth and holiness. Very expressive terms are employed to describe the wonderful alteration of views and feelings which now takes place. It is called a passing from death to life, a coming out of darkness into marvellous light, a birth, not by the will of the flesh, or of man, but of God. When this momentous internal revolution occurs, man becomes a new creature, or a new creation, in Christ Jesus, and so far as tastes, enjoyments, and way of life are concerned, old things pass away and all things become new. God is a different being, Christ a different Saviour, the Bible a different book, the church a different place, and heaven and hell different worlds. The change in all respects is too remarkable to occur, and the subject of it know nothing, and be able to tell nothing of it. Such certainly is the general rule. Though regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, men are not passive in it, in any sense, which implies ignorance of its nature and effects. Some, it is granted, may be sanctified from the womb, or the converting grace of God may accompany the earliest possible religious culture, so that there can be no distinct consciousness of a change of sides. No doubt instances of this sort not unfrequently occur, and what is more, they often prove singularly happy in their results. Every step of the whole subsequent life proves that the affections of these persons are set on things above, and this is the best of all.

evidence that they have been born from above. No one should ask for more. But this does not in the least militate against the statement, that none can be the real friends of Christ, without distinct marks of discipleship. The particular day or hour when the change occurred, may have preceded the period of recollection, or it may have been effected by very imperceptible processes, but the thing itself has occurred, as the whole tone and temper of the person evince. Thousands of men of the most unimpeachable Christian character, are never able to fix, with any degree of certainty, upon the precise time and place of their conversion. The tree is known by its fruit, and if the fruit be good, we need no other proof that the tree is good. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor do figs grow on thistles. Still, while all this is readily admitted, it would be a most unwarrantable inference, from such premises, to suppose that regeneration can ever take place without bringing along with it, and drawing after it, very decisive tests of its reality. The Lord's side is not so much like the other side as to render it impossible to distinguish between them. If it were so, we should not be exhorted to examine ourselves in order that we may ascertain whether we are in the faith. Look at any one genuine convert and see what the *change is*, as his spirit and conduct go to set it forth. Once, it might be said of him, with almost literal truth, that he cared for none of these things, but now the subject of religion is uppermost in his mind, when he lies down and rises up. Once, sin seemed a mere trifle which might be easily overlooked, but now it is the abominable thing that the Lord hates. Once, Christ was as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, but now he is the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. Once, he felt dissatisfied with the Divine government, but now he rejoices from the heart that the Lord reigns. In all these respects he is not as he formerly was, nor does he occupy the side he formerly did. There has been a great change and he has felt it.

But, let me add, it is not on past experience chiefly, much less exclusively, that the Christian lives. An old hope is worth very little, except as it is sustained and confirmed by present evidence; and for a man to cry peace to his soul, because some five, ten, or twenty years ago he was awakened and found comfort, is hazardous in the extreme. No one that really loves God, and is born of God, ever takes this ground. What has transpired is encouraging only as connected with existing exercises. This very day finds the believer, as much as at any former time, admitting that he is a sinner, exercising repentance, depending on Christ for justification, and striving for close conformity to the Divine will. In this sense he forgets the things which are behind, and presses on toward the mark. Do you still doubt on which side he is? Go listen to his prayers and see him perusing his Bible. Go sit down by his side in the day of trouble and witness his sweet submission to the will of God. Go learn how he daily feels, and on what his heart is supremely fixed. Hear him tell how good it is for one so poor and helpless as he knows himself to be, to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what consolation he derives from the thought that salvation from first to last is of the Lord. Mark with what interest he attends to the duties of religion; how precious are his seasons of private and domestic devotion; with what earnestness he listens to the preaching of the gospel; and how delighted he is to hear of the conversion of sinners. These things tell us, with sufficient plainness, on which side he is.

It is not asserted that the good man's evidences are equally distinct at all times. Allowance must be made for hours of gloom, arising from mental depression, debilitating disease, and the fiery darts of the evil one. It may be God's plan to lead him now and then through the deep waters of temptation and desertion. No wonder if at such seasons every ray of the sun of righteousness seems to be shut out from his soul, and he can do nothing but write bitter things against himself. But the sadness of the believer, often scarcely less than his joy, his complaints scarcely less than his praises, his discouragements scarcely less than his confidence, indicate where his treasure lies. Desires after God tell what the state of the heart is, as well as joy in God. To such the language applies with all its emphasis: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

As a general thing men *may* know, and they *ought* to know, where they stand. As there are but two sides that can possibly be taken, and as all on one side are the friends of God, and all on the other are his enemies, this is not a matter that should be left in uncertainty for a single day or hour. Some are so evidently on the wrong side that the case is determined by merely looking at it. Like Cain, they openly go out from the presence of the Lord; like Saul, they directly disobey God; and like Sodom, they proclaim their sin, and hide it not. Every thing—their neglect of the Bible—their mis-improvement of the Sabbath, and their omission of prayer, indicates more clearly than words could do, how it is with them. Had they the opportunity they would no doubt unite with the men who once came to the Saviour and prayed him to depart from their coasts. But, blessed be God, others are just as openly and publicly on the right side. If any thing can be made clear by human testimony, it is that they have chosen the good part, which can never be taken away from them. This is often plain to themselves, and it is no less plain to others.

God's Word contains very unambiguous *marks* of discipleship. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "Abide in me and

I in you, for as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Such texts, faithfully and prayerfully applied, can scarcely lead to mistakes. In the decision of this question we must not rely upon our baptism, or our pious ancestry, or our religious education, or our respect for the institutions of the gospel. None of these things will stand us instead when the judgment is set and the books are opened. The Bible tells us that many will say to Christ at the last day, "Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets?" To whom he will reply: "Depart from me; I never knew you." Solemn reflection this! Names are nothing; places are nothing; offices are nothing. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." All that are on the Lord's side, belong to what church they may, and wear what badge they please, love the cross, the yoke, and the kingdom of the Redeemer, and prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy. For this one great object they desire to live, and for it they hope to die. Is it not true, then, that if men are faithful to themselves, they may know on which side they stand? The touch-stone is at hand, and the idea of passing on towards the retributions of eternity, with no certainty as to the final issue, is dreadful indeed. This is not a question which should be left undecided.

III. *There are good and sufficient reasons why all should be on the Lord's side.*

There can be no disagreement here. If there be but two sides that can possibly be chosen, the side of holiness or sin, of the church or the world, of God or Satan, who can hesitate, for a moment, where to place himself. Why delay or waver.

1. The Lord's side is the *right* side—the side of pure and unchanging rectitude. No man can justify it to himself that he does not at once break off his sins by righteousness, and accept of the salvation offered to him in the gospel, and become a visible follower of the Redeemer. The case is too plain to admit of dispute. If we have offended God, ought we not, upon every fair and honorable principle, to be sorry for it? and if he has provided a way of pardon, ought we not immediately and thankfully to embrace it? Not to do this, it may be safely said, is to go contrary to the clearest dictates of judgment and conscience. God is too good a being; his laws are too excellent, and his gospel is too precious to be either neglected or despised, by a single individual, without incurring a weight of guilt sufficient to crush the sinner to the dust. In itself considered, and apart from all consequences, either in this world or the world to come, it is right to be on the Lord's side; and not to be there is a grievous, unmitigated wrong. Where should thinking, reflecting, im-

mortal creatures be found, if not with him in whom they live and move and have their being, who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working.

There is no epithet that can fully depict the criminality of being in the ranks of opposition to God. Irrespective of every thing to be gained or lost here or hereafter, the right and the wrong may easily be seen, if we will but pause a moment to inquire who they are who are on the Lord's side, and who they are who are on the side of his adversaries. In one class we find all the excellent and lovely of the universe, holy angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, patriarchs, prophets and apostles, and the whole blessed company of such as have been redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb. But who, let me ask, are on the other side? The devil and his angels, with the souls of lost men, and all the Sabbath-breakers, profane swearers and unbelievers now on earth, or that will be found on earth till the end of time. Consider well where you stand, and among whom you stand, if still unreconciled to God. Have you really thought that by living estranged from your Maker and refusing to have the Lord Jesus Christ to reign over you, you are virtually seeking to make a covenant with death and an agreement with hell? Do you realize that the taking of such a stand links your destiny in with all that is vile and odious in the universe of God? Let the careless, impenitent world judge as it may; the day is hastening on when, not to be really and truly on the Lord's side, will be regarded as a crime of the darkest hue. The "ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," and for man not to know God, or consider his claims, is to sink himself below the beasts that perish. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this; the Lord has nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against him.

2. Again. The Lord's side is the side of *real* and *permanent enjoyment*. On this point we call for the testimony of the men who have come over from the ranks of sin and of the world, and have sincerely and from the heart avouched the Lord Jehovah to be their God. These are the best of all witnesses, for the simple reason, that they know both sides. What, then, is their united and constant declaration in regard to this matter? They tell us, with one unvarying voice, that the peace of a good man is like a river, and his righteousness as the waves of the sea. Their language, without a solitary exception is, "godliness with contentment is great gain." Experience has taught them the difference between the fountain of living waters and those broken cisterns that can hold no water. Even on the score of mere happiness, nothing could induce them to go back to the other side. Nay, we may summon as witnesses bad men as well as good men. Often are they compelled to cry out, Balaam-like, "how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be

like his." The want of religion teaches the worth of it, scarcely less than the possession of it, and the pain occasioned by its absence shows its value as fully as the pleasure produced by its presence. We need no prophet to come and tell us that "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

A life of piety and a life of happiness go hand-in-hand together, our enemies themselves being judges. We but utter the feelings of every individual bosom, just as truly as we utter the declaration of God's Word, when we affirm that "there is no peace for the wicked." Felicity is not found in connexion with impenitence, and unbelief, and neglect of the counsels of the Most High. Every one, unless it be a few abandoned reprobates, is ready to admit that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come." The best of men and the worst are of the same opinion here. That the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever, is a fact written on the heart as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. Be assured you will never know what real enjoyment is until you come over to the Lord's side. God himself takes part with all such as fear and love his blessed name, and whoever touches them maliciously, touches the apple of his eye. His truth and honor are pledged in the presence of the whole intelligent universe for their highest welfare. The very trials they endure will but purify their affections, the tears they shed will become so many seeds of sacred joy, and the disappointments through which they pass will only prepare them to wear a brighter crown. God gives them grace as a prelude to giving them glory, and no good thing does he ever withhold from them that walk uprightly. His presence with them banishes fear, neutralizes pain, affords support in trouble, and gilds the gloom of the grave with the radiance of immortality. All is well to those who are on the Lord's side, and will be well for ever.

3. Once more. The Lord's side is the side that must ultimately *prevail*. Be it known that those who forget God and refuse submission to his anointed Son, are chargeable with the folly of embarking on board a vessel which is doomed inevitably to be wrecked. "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" was the desponding cry of one of the worst foes the cross ever knew; and it will be the cry of every wicked man. This outburst of desperation was wrung from the poor rebel's heart, by the gathering storms of Divine indignation, but it is nothing more than every impenitent sinner shall express sooner or later. All power in heaven and on earth is committed to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will reign until every enemy is put under his feet. Though for a while they may exalt themselves to heaven, the hand of the Almighty will be sure, by and by, to bring them down to hell.

Decide for yourselves whether any one can harden himself against God and prosper. As well might the stubble lift itself up against the whirlwind which prostrates the mighty oak. Inevitable downfall awaits every man and every interest that shall ultimately be found dissevered from the kingdom and interests of the Lord God Almighty. Nothing can ever stay the course of omnipotent justice. The destruction of the wicked is inevitable; for has God said it, and will he not do it? And it will be overwhelming; for who can stand when he rises up? Those that believe not must be damned. The wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God. As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, O man, there is but one safe side. Only join yourself to the Lord according to the provisions of his own gracious and perpetual covenant, and his kingdom will become your kingdom, his interests your interests, and his joy, your joy forever. God will cover you with his feathers, and under his wing shalt thou trust. If the blessed Redeemer continue to hold his throne, and to be exalted at the right hand of power, he will bring you off conqueror and more than conqueror. In his hands you cannot but be safe. Come what will, his enemies shall all melt away like frost before the rising sun, but upon himself and upon his friends will the crown flourish.

In conclusion—will you not, one and all, cordially and resolutely *choose the Lord's* side this very day? There is, I beg you to consider, but one single alternative: you must be for God or against him. Either his friends or enemies you are at the present moment; either his friends or enemies you will be when you come to die; and either his friends or enemies must you continue during the long lapse of eternal ages. O make your decision at once, and make it as you will wish you had done when the angel lifts his hand to heaven, and swears that time shall be no longer.

Men and brethren, have you an aching heart that needs the balm of Gilead? Are you desirous to find a friend to whom you may unbosom that secret anguish which often corrodes your spirits? Does the world at seasons look all empty and desolate like a vast wilderness? Would you secure a safe shelter from the tempest which is finally to descend upon the workers of iniquity? Choose then, Oh choose the Lord's side without delay. If you wait a week, or a day, or an hour, it may be too late. To-morrow's sun, for aught mortal man can say, may shine on your grave. Many a dear friend feels a deep interest in the decision you make. Here is a venerated father, with his head all covered with blossoms for the tomb, exclaiming in your ears, "Beloved children, I charge you to meet me at the right hand of the Son of God." Yonder is a devout mother just going to a better land; but she stops, to cry out, "My son, the son of my womb, the son of my vows—choose the Lord's side." A fond sister throws her arms around your neck, and with her sweetest kisses says, "Dear brother, come go with me, and I will do you good." Nay, even remoter relationship utters her voice and asks, "How can I bear to see the evil that is coming upon my kindred, and how can I endure the destruction of my people?" Alas! if you press on to perdition, you must break through this thick array of tears and prayers. But there are kinder, tenderer accents than all these. It is not a stranger that extends to you his arm and solicits your love, but Jesus—for your sakes clothed in flesh, and known as the sufferer of Calvary. Hear him speaking out of the fulness of his heart, and inviting you to come over on the Lord's side. By the sorrows of Gethsemane and the agonies of the cross, he asks you to share with him in his kingdom and in his crown. Can you refuse?

My friends, the day is at hand when it will be felt to be worth ten thousand worlds like this to be on the right side. Great events appear to be thickening and crowding together in the distance; and if we may foretell the future by the shadows which these events cast before them, a period of unheard-of moment can not be far off. The tempest's blast is even now sounding, and the hosts are mustering for battle. But there is a safe side, and I look around upon a troubled, agitated world, only to urge you with more pressing earnestness, to come, with all you have, and identify your cause with the cause of truth and of God. Enter into the chambers of his mercy, and hide yourself until the indignation be overpast.

Now is the accepted time, and this is the day of salvation. In the name of that Saviour, whose minister I am, I offer you a gracious admission among the ranks of the redeemed. On his behalf I come, once more, to assure you there yet is room. O neighbor, companion, friend, there is a place for you. The process of enlistment into the army of Prince Immanuel is still going on, and though I cannot promise you exemption from toil and strife, yet, blessed be God! I can guarantee final victory. But, remember, a little delay may close the door against you forever. Alas, my dear people, painful visions rise before my mind! I imagine that the day for which all other days were made, has come, and pastor and flock are summoned to meet the Son of God on his great white throne. Preaching is over, prayer is over, entreaty is over. But all are not on the same side. The wife is beckoned to stand on the right hand, but the husband on the left; the parent is found here, but the child there; the sister is in one place, but her brother in another. O Saviour of men, must it, must it be so? Are there to be two sides among the people who have so long been listening to my voice? Forbid it, gracious God. There is nothing which I would not give to meet you all in heaven. Would you be right at last? Then give immediate and earnest heed to the question which is put to you to day:—Who is on the Lord's side? and answer it as you believe it will be answered in the hour that shall make manifest the secrets of every heart.

SERMON DCXXIX.

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GOSPEL MINISTER'S CHARACTER AND PLATFORM.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."—1 COR. ii. 2.

WHEN Jesus Christ, the one, only, sole and supreme Head of the Church, ascended up on high, after his resurrection from the dead, "He led captivity captive," and for a legacy to his people, "gave gifts to men." Among the chief of these gifts are the influences of the Holy Spirit and the written word, teaching us the will of God for our salvation. "*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.*"—EPH. iv. 11-15.

1st. It is obvious from this passage of holy scripture that *living* teachers of the way of salvation are set in the church by Divine appointment. At one time they were patriarchs and prophets; at another, apostles and evangelists; and now, they are bishops or pastors and teachers. While the Revelation of the Divine will was in progress, and while the Gospel was being gradually revealed to mankind, prophets and apostles of the highest order were necessary; but when the canon of the Revealed will was complete—when the Gospel dispensation was fully introduced, prophets and apostles gave place to pastors and teachers, who are bishops or overseers of the people. 2dly. It is equally palpable that the object of the Divine appointment of a class of men from time to time to be servants of the Most High God, showing unto us the way of salvation, is eminently for the instruction of mankind—for the edifying and comforting of believers. The Church is God's great teaching Institution. Her ministers are missionaries of light, and heralds of His good will to men. They are sent to teach all nations *for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

I. In the Scriptures of our God various significant names are given to religious teachers, expressive of their character.

We find bishop, overseer, pastor, ambassador, angel or messenger applied to one and the same person. These names are expressive not of different orders or ranks in the Gospel ministry, but significant of various duties performed by the ministers of the church. They are for the same reason called rulers, governors, watchmen, soldiers, builders, and laborers. These titles are highly expressive of their character and appropriate work. *Are they laborers?* Then it is their duty to sow, plant, water and cultivate God's vineyard. They are sent to toil with pains and diligence, and wait for the harvest. *Soldiers?* Then they are engaged in war against the powers of darkness. As soldiers they are required to endure fatigue, and to persevere through dangers and difficulties, following their glorious leader unto death and victory. *Watchmen?* Then are they set on the high places, to give due warning by night and day of the dangers that threaten. They are set to watch for souls, as men that must give an account. They must keep awake themselves, and arouse the sleeping, and cry aloud to those that are dead in sin, lest the blood of those that perish should fall upon their heads as unfaithful watchmen. They are commanded to utter all God's judgments, whether the people will hear or forbear. And as *stewards of the manifold mysteries of the household of God*, they are to give every one his portion in season. Milk to babes and meat to such as are strong. *Are they ambassadors?* Then they are the accredited ministers of heaven, to treat of peace between God and man. To them is given the word of Reconciliation. They are sent by Christ, and speak in God's name, as though God did beseech us by them to be reconciled to Him. As ambassadors their mission is one of the highest dignity and of most tremendous responsibilities. They are to maintain the dignity and honor of their government, and so manage their mission, that the sovereign clemency, wisdom, glory and majesty of the King of kings may be seen in the salvation of sinners reconciled to Him and saved from sin by the death and mediation of His own well-beloved Son. Are they called *angels or messengers?* This is the title given to those pure and sublime natures who surround the eternal throne—ever doing the will of God—and are sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. Ministers who are the angels of the churches, which are the glory of Christ, should be like these holy spirits, in elevation of thought and devotion, and in the consecration of themselves to the study of the works, the word and glory of God; and as the angels above, ever be found doing the will of their Lord, especially in ministering to the souls for whom the "angel of the covenant" made himself a propitiatory sacrifice. The most common appellation by which religious teachers are known, is that of minister or pastor, both of which terms are expressive of the duties of their office. As ministers, they are servants of the church for Christ's sake. As bishops or overseers or pastors, which terms mean the same thing, they are to overlook and feed the flock. A pastor or shepherd is one who takes care of sheep, not only that they feed in good pastures, but also that they be not torn by wild beasts, or hurt in any other way.* In the favorite *twenty-third* psalm, God is called a SHEPHERD, by which we are to understand, that He leads, feeds, preserves and heals his people, as a shepherd does his flock. Our Blessed Saviour calls himself the good shepherd, who not only exposes his own life, but does actually and willingly lay it down for his own sheep, and takes charge, oversight and care of them, dispensing to them such things as they have need of. In a few places of Scripture civil and political rulers are called pastors. In the Bible, ministers of the Gospel are called shepherds, bishops or pastors, signifying that their office was, like that of a shepherd, to feed, lead, guard, heal, and watch over their charges. The prophet Jeremiah, in the name of the Lord, promised the ten tribes, if they would return to Him, by repentance, that He would give them pastors after his own heart, who should feed them with knowlege and understanding—that is, *instruct* and *save* them. But the true Israel are the same in every age, and that which was the richest promise to the church in prophetic times, is the richest gift that God has bestôwed upon his people in these last days—pastors after his own heart, who have an open vision from Him, to reveal unto the people the riches of His Grace.

As then the pastoral office is one of divine appointment, the churches are to love their pastors, and tenderly cherish them, and honor them very highly for their work's sake, and encourage and sustain them in their many arduous labors.

Pastors being called of God to their holy office—being set apart for the edification of the church, should devote themselves wholly and faithfully to their work. They should love the truth and preach it faithfully and affectionately, and so conduct themselves as to magnify their office by glorifying God in the salvation of the souls of men

II. Thus we see by whatever titles ministers of the Gospel are known in the Scriptures, the prominent idea is, that they are men of God, *servants of the Most High*, converted by His grace, called by His Spirit, and set apart to His work. And the nature of their office, and their place in the world's history, not now understood, and their bearing on the cycles of a rapidly coming eternity in regard to the happiness or misery of immortal souls that are passing through time on our globe to future immensity, may be farther seen by considering briefly THE GREAT

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* See Cruden.

PLATFORM, on which they are set forth as a spectacle to men and angels. Their character, titles and work have passed rapidly before us. The text was the platform of the great apostle before Jew and Gentile, in Arabia and in Athens, in Jerusalem and in Corinth.

The CROSS OF CHRIST was his favorite topic. The chosen subject of his discourse, the grand theme of all his writings. He gloried not in his Abrahamic descent, not in his Hebrew lore, not in his classic attainments, not in his mighty intellect, but in the Cross of Christ. Though a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law blameless, and though brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, we do not hear him speak of his genealogy or of his learning. Nor does he boast of his miraculous gifts or visions, or eminent usefulness, although he had been caught up to the third heavens and had visions unutterable, and had planted churches and built churches not on another man's foundation, and had been honored as the *very chiefest of the apostles*. All these things he considered as nothing. "God forbid that I should glory," says he, "save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. *To know Christ and Him crucified* is to know the whole Gospel, and to preach from this platform is to preach Christ crucified as the whole Gospel. The cross of Christ is put for His humiliation and suffering. It is the representative of His death, its manner and ignominy. To preach Christ and Him crucified, therefore, is to preach salvation through the satisfaction which He rendered unto the divine and immutable law—to explain the method by which sin is pardoned, and how the forgiveness of the penitent sinner is reconciled with the justice and holiness of God. To preach Christ and Him crucified, then, is to declare the miraculous conception of the Son of God—his true human nature, and yet His proper Divinity—to reveal His holy and benevolent character—how He laid down His life as an expiation for our sins—how he was wounded for our transgressions—bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace being laid upon Him—a lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the Lamb that was slain still standing bleeding before the throne in the midst of the elders and angels that are round about the throne. Hence, to *know Christ and Him crucified*, is to set forth the death of Christ as the great central point of the Christian system—that the great purpose for which He came into the world was to die under the law, in the room and stead of his people—that by this great vicarious sacrifice of Himself, in behalf of His people, God can be just and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus. To *know Christ and Him crucified* is to know the glorious method of *Free Grace* revealed in the Gospel—a method honorable to God, because, while He receives the transgressor into favor, He expresses his aversion to sin in the strongest manner, and requires that the demand of His holy law be perfectly

fulfilled; and yet all this is done in a method suited to man, coming down to his weakness and wretchedness, and offering him just as he is in this sin-smitten world, in which he is born, and out of which he is to die and appear before his Creator, a finished gratuitous, honorable and glorious salvation. To preach Christ and Him crucified is to preach the being and glorious perfection of Jehovah as the one only living and true God, the Creator of all things; the future judgment and eternal state of righteous retribution; the lost state of man, and his recovery through the One great Mediation; the necessity of regeneration, repentance, conversion and personal holiness through the Spirit; the duties and precepts of the Gospel.

"THE WORD OF GOD ONLY;
THE GRACE OF CHRIST ONLY;
THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT ONLY."

2. *The minister of the Gospel who stands on the apostle's great platform must know Christ experimentally as his Saviour.* He must be truly a pious man. He must know by experience what it is to repent and believe, and have a sweet experience in his own soul of the preciousness of the Saviour's love. How can he point others to the Lamb of God, if he has not seen Him for himself? How can he teach others, who has not himself been taught? There is something fearful in the idea of an unconverted and ungodly minister. Terrible is the thought that his own doctrines and preaching shall come up as a swift witness against himself in the great day of eternity—that having preached Christ to others, and thereby been the instrument of saving others, he should himself be a castaway. But such things have occurred. There were wicked prophets and false apostles, and there are doubtless unconverted ministers. It becomes us all to watch and pray.

3. *The minister's platform is to believe and preach the same truths that Jesus Christ believed and preached.* There is no irreverence in speaking of the creed and worship of our Lord. He was an example in all righteousness. His inner life as the God-man—mediator, as to the truth which he believed, the precepts he honored and the devotions he poured out to his God, is the highest model for the piety of every one that believes in Him. As his ministers, we are to believe and preach what the Son of God believed and preached, concerning God his Father, himself and the Eternal Spirit, and the whole economy of free grace. The DIVINE WORD, therefore, which is the utterance of Christ's Spirit to us by prophets and apostles, is the sum total of all we are to believe and preach. It is our armament, arsenal, fleet, artillery and land forces, with which we are to lead his sacramental hosts in our great aggressive movements upon the kingdom of darkness. We must enforce and explain the Scriptures, because they

testify of Jesus, and therefore it is that in them we have eternal life. The Scriptures set forth Christ crucified in promises, prophecies and types. They give an account of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and intercession. They represent from beginning to end a suffering, atoning, dying, yet living and reigning Messiah as the only hope of mankind. The sacred oracles are our "only Rule of Faith and manners." It is by the *truth through the sanctification of the Spirit, that men are to be saved —sanctified through the truth—begotten by the truth.* The Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. There is then great amplitude as well as emphasis in the Apostle's injunction—PREACH THE WORD. If insulated texts are used, however eloquently and skilfully it may be done, there is danger that the minister's discourses will be substituted for the Divine Word, and that his discourses will become mere dry rhetorical flourishes or essays, and SENTIMENTS, opinions, and fancies be regarded as the teachings of eternal truth. Holy Scripture must be explained by Holy Scripture, and not wrested out of its proper connection. The customs of the country of their several writers, and the idioms and meanings of the words in which the mind of the Spirit has been communicated, must be understood by the interpreter of the sacred text. This expository method of preaching is sometimes called lecturing. It is more difficult, if it be well done, than the topical essay kind of preaching; but I doubt not far more agreeable to God, who hath placed the chief honor on his word as his instrument for converting men from error. Earnest, pointed, practical exposition was without doubt the primitive mode of preaching. It was thus Ezra preached. He read the law and then caused the people to know its meaning. The blessed Saviour stood up and read out of the Jewish Scriptures, and then sat down and taught the people the true meaning of what he had read. It was thus Philip preached to the Eunuch, and in like manner we find that Paul and the other apostles were daily engaged in expounding the Scriptures to the people in the synagogues. The Reformers, and the most eminent and useful ministers of Christ in past ages, have been able doctrinal, expository preachers of the Word. This mode of preaching has this advantage—that the minister always has his subject before him, and in going through a book by chapter and verse, all sorts of characters are spread out before him, and all manner of opinions, so that he has an opportunity of striking home every kind of error, without seeming to aim his discourses at particular persons in his congregation. It may be best, sometimes, for a pastor to use but a single text as the theme of his discourse; but the fullness and the richness, the profitableness and the *mellowness* of his ministrations, will depend upon his acquaintance with, fondness for, and ability in expounding the whole volume of God's truth. Its promises, threatenings, doctrines and precepts, rewards and punishments, are set forth best when preached in the order of the Spirit of God. If a minister of the Gospel, through ignorance or indolence, or for the want of courage, smother up the light that is given him—if he do not preach and cause his hearers to understand the great truths of Revelation, he is a *traitor* to his Sovereign, or totally unfit for his mission. The burden of the Lord on the minister who stands on the Apostle's platform, will always be "Repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ." "Christ the wisdom of God and the power of God." "Of God Christ is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and complete redemption."

4. *On the Apostle's platform Christ is set forth as the minister's* MODEL *in the manner as well as the matter of preaching.* The minister of the Gospel who knows nothing but Christ and Him crucified will strive to imitate the Son of God in his humility, piety and zeal. Our Lord had all wisdom and power, yet never was there one so meek and unassuming. He never exerted his omnipotence for display, nor for His own personal comfort. *He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon himself the form of a servant*—humbled himself—emptied himself of his ineffable glory—and became a man—a man of sorrows and of sufferings, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The minister of Christ, therefore, is not to preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Saviour of sinners. He is not to preach his own fancies or sentiments, but the words of eternal life. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, the unsearchable riches of Christ." There may be—there will be differences and diversities as to the form and manner in which Divine truths are presented by preachers of the Word; yet Christ must ever be the centre in which all the lines of Truth meet. The preacher of the WORD may command the wealth of history, the powers of eloquence and the charms of rhetoric—splendid talents, varied and profound attainments, great learning and untiring research, and the more knowledge of men and things, of learning sacred and profane he can lay under tribute, the better able is he to be useful, but like the wise men from the East, he must lay all his talents and attainments at the feet of Jesus. If he speak in "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," let it be of Christ, *the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person—the Lord* JEHOVAH, OUR STRENGTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. The Apostle Paul, on the great platform laid down by himself, is an example to be well studied and followed. He had talents to shine in the Senate, or to rule in the Sanhedrim—genius and position to have been among the first men in his nation; but the only pre-eminence he desired after his conversion, was a pre-eminence in suffering and in devotion to the glory of His Divine master. See Acts xx: 17,

27. Paul was a preacher of *free grace*—a doctrinal, argumentative, earnest, practical preacher. He brought logic and rhetoric and philosophy and the heathen classics, and a well trained and powerful mind to the cross of Christ, and baptized them all into his blood. The prominent, the chief topic in all his discourses and in all his epistles, is *free grace.* How often do we hear him acknowledge his indebtedness to redeeming love. He seems never to weary of the theme, nor to have been ashamed of his obligations. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*, was with him a sort of stereotyped address. He exulted in the obligations laid upon him as a sinner saved by free grace. He speaks of it as *undeserved, unexpected*, and when first revealed to him *undesired.* He says it came to him from the highest Heavens, arrested him in his career of impiety and persecution, and made known to him a saviour. *Free, sovereign grace* is the affecting theme that melts his heart, elevates his powers, and tunes his tongue to praise—which dissolves his whole soul in tenderness and pours out the deep emotions which heaved his bosom. He could say by experience: *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.* The grandeur of his mind; the amplitude and strength of his intellect; his moral courage; his heroic devotion, his patience in suffering; his powerful genius; his decision of character; his fixedness of purpose; his eloquence and zeal—all give him a prominence in the ministry of God's dear Son, that well entitle him to the study and careful imitation of all Christ's preaching servants. Who more powerful, massive, clear and overwhelming in argument than Paul with the subtle and vain philosopher? Who more terrible in dealing out the thunders of Jehovah and sounding forth the trumpet-tongued curses of Sinai against gainsayers and all the ungodly tribe, who refuse free grace? And yet never was there a more tender and affectionate son of consolation in his discourses to the timid disciple. He knew better than any other man how to wind his way into the human soul—"how to coil around its most sacred affections—how to explore the secret place of tears, and to put in motion all its kindest sympathies." But, it is when he speaks of the fullness, depth, length and breadth of free grace, whereof he was a minister, and an Apostle both to Jew and Gentile, that he looms higher and shines more gloriously than on any other subject. Here all his powers of intellect, and all his feelings are concentrated. He declares unhesitatingly that the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant—and that he had obtained it for this end, that in him, first the Saviour might show forth all long suffering to them who should believe on Him, to life everlasting. He regarded himself as a monument inscribed with:* THERE IS FORGIVENESS WITH GOD. He tells us, moreover,

that his ministry was marked with *many tears.* I have often thought of the Apostle in tears. I have tried to imagine how he must have looked when preaching free grace in tears. There is something peculiarly affecting, tender and sublime in the tears of an Apostle. But wherefore, O thou man of God, these "many tears?" Did he weep before the Jewish Sanhedrim or before the Roman Governor? Did he weep when he was shipwrecked—when he was put in prison—when he was scourged—when he was stoned and taken up half dead—or when he was in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, or in perils of false brethren, or when he was carried to Rome and appeared before Nero, and under sentence of death, or when taken to the block to be beheaded? No, my brethren, there is no record of any tears from Paul on any of these occasions. But he does tell us expressly, *that none of these things move me; nor do I count my life any thing, only that I may finish with joy the ministry of the Lord Jesus. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.*

The fountain of his tears was sealed up too deep to flow on his own account. But the great deeps of his heart were broken up, when he saw his countrymen rejecting the only Messiah—when he saw his fellow-men rejecting free grace—putting away from them the only words of eternal life. Having a full view of the completeness and glory of the Gospel, and of the terrors of the Lord, and the awful destruction that awaits the finally impenitent from the presence of the Lord, he could not refrain from tears. Now the eyes that knew no tears while he stood in chains before a Roman governor, nor when he was sentenced to death by the bloody Nero, are suffused and overflowing. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* He was willing to be accursed after the manner of Christ, for his brethren's sakes. Like the prophet, he was ready to exclaim, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." Whitefield and many other eminent servants of God have not been able to refrain from tears when pleading with sinners to be reconciled to God.

5. For a minister of the Gospel to stand on the platform of knowing nothing but Christ and Him crucified, is, as the dying Rutherford said to his fellow presbyters: "To do all for Christ; to pray for Christ, study and preach for Christ; feed the flock committed to your charge for Christ; to visit and catechise for God, and out of love to the souls of men, and to beware of men-pleasing." In a word, it is to make Christ the all in all of his ministry—the soul of all Christian graces, ordinances and sacraments. Psalms and hymns, spiritual songs, prayers and sermons, baptism and the holy supper are nothing without Christ. He gives them all

their value. Christ, my brethren, is the subject of all our preaching—the ground of argument, the magazine of arms, and the great motive of persuasion. He is all that we want to give peace to the conscience, strength to the feeble, patience and courage to the suffering. He is all that is wanted to purify the affections, and loosen us from earth, and lift us up to Heaven. Christ formed within us the hope of glory; will be followed by the setting of our affections on things that are above. If we preach the *law*, it is that it may be a schoolmaster to bring our fellow-men to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. If we preach *repentance*, it is because Christ is exalted to the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins—that repentance should be preached everywhere in his name. Do we preach *faith?* It is because Christ is the author, object, and finisher of faith. And if as faithful men, who cannot shun to declare the whole counsel of God, we preach *the torments of Hell*, it is to warn men of the wrath to come, and induce them to flee to Christ as a glorious refuge. And when we preach the joys of heaven, it is to allure to that bright world—to encourage sinners to fly to Christ, who is the way to the inheritance of the saints in glory. As ministers we are without occupation, commission, authority, subject or hope of success, except as we realize the presence and authority of Christ. One is our master, even Christ. It is his commandment to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." All our strength as ministers of the Gospel is from Christ. Paul and Apollos, Calvin and Edwards, are nothing without him. He giveth the increase. As the clouds from which the rain descends have not that rain in themselves, but derive it from the sea and various moist places of the earth, and then disperse it abroad; so all the *efficacy* of the Gospel which is preached, is derived from Jesus Christ, who is the overflowing fountain of all that is good and holy. The treasure is committed to earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God.

With two remarks, I close this discourse.

And the *first* is this, that to be a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is to bear an awful and fearful responsibility. No man should take this office upon himself unless he is called of God to it. And then he should ever bear in mind that he is set to watch for souls as one that must give an account to the Judge of quick and dead in the light of eternity. Christ's ascension gift is not nuncios, popes and cardinals; nor clergymen, nor assemblies, nor vicar-generals, nor rabbis, nor Ulemans, nor reverend, nor right reverends, but *bishops or pastors* to feed the people with knowledge and understanding. Of all things clerical, pride and pomp and hypocrisy are the most contemptible. What can be more melancholy than to see a man who is set between the living and the dead—a mouth for God—himself a poor sinful man, converted and saved by free grace, and honored with the ministry of reconciliation, so far forgetting his high calling as to compliment himself in the pulpit, and be far more anxious to show himself off, than to win souls to heaven by preaching Christ and Him crucified?

The *second remark* is, that in proportion to the divine authority attached to the living ministry of the word, is the responsibility on the part of the hearers of preachers of the Gospel, to take heed how and what they hear. As men sent of God to preach the Gospel of His grace, their authority is from heaven. In preaching Christ and Him crucified, they speak not their own words, but the words of God. If you receive their message, you shall inherit eternal life; if you reject it, you reject the offer of pardoning mercy from your eternal Judge. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.*

May the ever blessed Head of the Church multiply grace upon grace to you, my beloved brethren, and enable him whom you have called to be your pastor, and who is now set over you in the Lord, so to live and labor and preach from the glorious platform of the prophets and apostles, and of the noble army of martyrs, and of saints, that he may both save himself and those that hear him. May he be a burning and a shining light among you many years. May he be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost—mighty in the Scriptures—showing unto you the way of salvation; and when he stands before you at the judgment seat of Christ, may his sentence be: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou with this thy flock into the joy of thy Lord.*

AMEN, AND AMEN.

CREDULITY.

Infidels scoff at the *credulity* of the Christian. But let us fairly state the case, and see whether of all beings in existence the infidel is not the most weakly credulous. What is the infidel's creed? He believes, that the whole world united in a conspiracy to impose upon themselves about the era of the introduction of christianity; that they *invented* an universal persuasion of the coming of some great personage, and that by *mere accident* their conjecture was verified in the birth of Christ; that verses or poems, the productions of men who lived several hundred years before, *accidentally happened* to apply to that extraordinary person, and things the most contradictory did *accidentally* concur in him; that he was a deceiver, and an enthusiast, and a false claimant to a divine commission, and yet, that he was, without exception, the purest and most amiable of beings; and that he succeeded in his object without any of the means usually employed by similar characters; for without money, without troops, without power, he convinced multitudes of his divine authority. He believes, that after Christ was openly crucified as a malefactor, twelve illiterate fishermen took up the extraordinary tale that he had risen from the dead, although these fishermen *must have known the contrary if he was a deceiver*, and without any assignable motive, in the face of danger and death, they formed the bold design of converting the whole world to a belief of this strange story; that although aware of the calamities which they must thus occasion to mankind, and therefore men of unfeeling and cruel disposition, their writings and actions exhibit the purest morality and the most benevolent spirit; that without education or literature they composed several works, in which the leading character or subject of their memoirs, if a fictitious personage, is unquestionably one of the most wonderful creatures of imagination that the range of literature can furnish—a character altogether unlike that of any being who ever dwelt on earth—sustained throughout with the most exact consistency, and the most minute and apparently unnecessary particularity of dates and times and places; that they travelled over the greater part of the world, every where successful, though every where persecuted; and that they were eventually the means of subverting the religious establishment of the most powerful nation on earth. Yes, and the infidel believes that all this was CHANCE; these men impostors; the whole story a fable and a forgery!! If it be so, then the case is without a parallel in history; and the man who receives the creed of the infidel, betrays a credulity so capacious, a faculty so prodigious of overlooking difficulties, that we cannot but suspect there is something wrong in the ordinary powers of his understanding. But the case is otherwise. Infidelity is not so much a derangement of the *head* as of the *heart*. Believing as we do, that the words of Christ are words of eternal truth, we maintain that it is impossible for any man to disbelieve the Bible, who searches it with a right spirit. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

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SERMON DCXXX.

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THE PORTION OF THE UNGODLY.

"Men of the world, which have their portion in this life."—Psalm xvii. 14.

It is a striking description of human depravity, which is given as a reason why the Spirit would not always strive with man, "that he also is flesh." Such is the predominance in man, as fallen, of the flesh over the Spirit—of the sensitive over the rational—that it sinks him from the dignity of his original, as made after the image of God, into a creature of flesh. But to man, as thus fallen, the Spirit of God is graciously given, by his secret and powerful insinuations of light and love, to strive with him; awakening him to the consideration of those divine glories which alone are answerable to his higher nature, and so recalling him to God and heaven. Those who yield to his influence are made partakers of his holiness, and so are named after him spiritual; while the rest are fleshly or carnal still: and the distinction thus formed passes over into the future world, and constitutes the elementary principle of eternal life or death. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

The same distinction is marked in the Scriptures by the phrases, "sons of men," and "sons of God." "Men of the world," and "men of God." "O ye sons of men! how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing? But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is *godly* for himself." The sons of men and the godly are here spoken of in contrast with each other. So also our Saviour said to his disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This language marks a difference among men that is radical. It imports that the world are naturally in apostasy from God, and that those who are morally conformed to him, are not of the world; but are formed to a new and heavenly character. The same thing is presented to us, in the passage which contains the text: "Deliver my soul," the Psalmist prays; "from the wicked, which are thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord; from men of the world, which have their portion in this life; and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." David found himself encompassed with enemies. They were "the wicked" men whose wickedness made them enemies to God as well as himself. They were "men of the world who had their portion in this life"—men who as they sought, received, their good things here—many of them were prosperous men; filled with hid treasures, and securely laying up for their children the possessions which themselves enjoyed: while he was encompassed with affliction. But he did not envy them. For a thousand times more than they enjoyed, he would not exchange conditions with them. The happiness which he sought was of another kind, and would remain when the world should have passed away. It would be found in Him who only hath immortality, and would be perfected when he and all men should awake from the slumbers of the grave. My brethren, there have always and every where been these two classes of men. While all naturally are of the world, there are those into whose minds the true light has shined; those who have learned by faith to tread this world under their feet, in their aspirations after the glory that is to be revealed; those who, under the trials of this life, have solaced themselves with the hope and the foretaste of what they are to enjoy in the future. To which of these classes we belong is a matter of infinite concern. Whatever we are, we must soon die, and accordingly as we shall have been men of the world, or men of God, will be our future destiny. God has suspended our state hereafter on our ultimate choice here. He has submitted to ourselves to decide whether, as men of the world we will have our portion here, or as men of God will seek it in the enjoyment of himself in heaven. "To them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, he will render eternal life—and to men that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish."

That we may decide in this matter wisely, let us consider who are men of the world, and what is their portion.

I. Who are men of the world?

In general they are men who love the world as their chief good; who pursue it as the main thing; who depend upon it for their happiness, and consequently forsake God as the object of their supreme and ultimate delight and confidence. They are not, of course, profligate men; nor infidels, nor despisers of religion. They may be men of amiable feelings, and correct moral habits; they may be professed believers in the Gospel, and careful observers of its forms of worship; they may be considered by others, and consider themselves followers of Christ, and heirs of his kingdom; as the body of the Jews were professed worshippers of God, and in their own view, his peculiar people; and yet were pronounced by our Saviour to be men of the world. Men of the world are men who love the world, and so love it, as to be without the love of God.

But this is too general. It concerns us to understand how this leading disposition of the heart manifests itself.

I remark then more particularly:

1st. Men of the world are those whose thoughts tend to the things of the world. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The thoughts, like the needle to the pole, are true to the governing affections of the heart. They may be diverted, as the needle may be turned from its standing point. The thoughts of worldly men may be arrested by overpowering considerations, and turned to God, or heaven, the judgment, or the eternal world, although most uncongenial to their chosen pursuits; but when left to their natural tendency, they will show by the character of their objects, what is the character of the man. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit." A spiritual mind, even in the midst of worldly occupations, delights often to rise in the contemplation of spiritual things; and so a worldly mind, in the midst of spiritual engagements—when the messages of grace are being addressed to the ear, or while prayer or praise employs the tongue, roves after worldly things. Of the blessed man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, it is said, that "his meditation is therein day and night;" while of the wicked it is said, "God is not in all his thoughts." "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity."

2d. Men of the world are those whose feelings are excited mainly by the things of the world. The stirring emotions of men, as well as the current of their thoughts, ordinarily show where are their hearts. Those of the men of the world cluster around those worldly interests which they regard as their chief good. Their joys are enlivened, their hopes are raised, their fears are roused, or their griefs hang heavily on their hearts, just accordingly as success in a temporal view attends them, and their prospects are fair; or as dangers in regard to these thicken, or disappointment befalls them; while an unbroken stupidity reigns in their hearts, under all that can be said to them of God and Christ; of sin and redemption; of heaven and hell; of the claims of the Saviour's love, and the condition of a fallen world. Why is it thus? Not because these things are unknown, or their importance is disbelieved, or their own personal interest in them is seriously doubted. It is because their feelings, with their thoughts, are so absorbed by worldly pursuits, that spiritual and eternal things are unthought of, and so uncared for; are put away as though they belonged to a world of shadows, and so have no power over the sensibilities of the soul. Thus, according to the emphatical description of the Bible, they are "dead in trespasses and sins"—alive to the world, and dead to God; walking in the vanity of their minds, "having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.

3dly. Men of the world are those whose conversation turns mainly on the things of the world. "They are of the world," John says of certain corrupt teachers, "therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Their social communication corresponds to their worldly spirit, and those who are of the same spirit are entertained by them, listen to them, and are persuaded by them. It must be so while men speak as they think and feel, and while the thoughts and feelings of worldly men are engrossed by worldly things. As our Saviour said to the Pharisees, "How can ye being evil speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart (the inner man) the mouth speaketh." "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart"—the law of God written there; Christ dwelling there; the word of God treasured there; the light, and love, and joy, and hope of the Spirit reigning there, "bringeth forth good things;" "and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart"—selfish principles, envious feelings, vain imaginations—"bringeth forth evil things." A man's words may indeed, and often do, belie the feelings of his heart. His words may be smoother than oil, while his feelings are as drawn swords; or with the mouth he may draw near unto God, while his heart is far from him. But we now refer only to the free, unconstrained, habitual communications of men, and these will be found a true expression of their hearts, and accordingly to the very impressive declaration of our Saviour which I have just recited, he subjoins, "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

Those men whose social converse is habitually and characteristically worldly, whatever their professions or hopes may be, will be adjudged to be men of the world.

4thly. Their conduct is decided mainly by motives drawn from the world. Mankind are decided in their conduct by that which they regard as the chief good. To glorify God, and advance the cause of truth and holiness; to promote the great interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and share in its immortal blessedness, is the commanding good in the view of some men, which habitually determines their choice and conduct, which carries them above those worldly influences that would draw them aside, and which sustains them in a patient course of well-doing amidst all discouragement and opposition. These are men of faith; men of God. Men of the world, on the other hand, as in respect to their thoughts, feelings, and words, so also in respect to their actions, are governed by the things of the world. Interest sways them, or honor bribes them, or pleasure throws her silken cords around them, and binds and governs them. They are slaves of the world, and consequently slaves of sin—of the avarice or ambition, of the lust or pride, of the selfish attachment or the bitter resentments, which the world excites and feeds. They pray or they restrain prayer; they are religious, or they neglect religion; they give or they withhold; they are just and true and faithful, or they are unjust, untrue, unfaithful; they are friends of temperance, learning, religion, and every good object, or they are indifferent or opposed to all these, just as in their view, some worldly end is to be gained by the one or the other; or if in particular cases they are decided by motives drawn from the eternal world, it is by constraint—it is in opposition to their governing affections, it is because they are afraid to live as their hearts would incline them; and this commonly is only for a season. In circumstances of trial, when the interests, the esteem, the splendor, and other gratifications of the world are set in competition with a good conscience towards God, their actions show which has the chief place in their hearts.

Such are men of the world. Making choice of the world as their chief good, their thoughts, their feelings, their words, and their main pursuits terminate on its interests and gratifications: and so in their hearts, they depart from the Lord, and their lives, fair and reputable as they may appear, are an unvarying course of apostasy: "for if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." We are to consider,

II. Their portion. In general it is a portion in this life—a form of expression which implies that there is a life beyond the present, and that the men of the world have no portion there. They have here their good things. Having made choice of the world as their portion, and cleaved to it, this is their all. In the nature of the case, it must be so. Having placed their affections on the world, they can enjoy no higher good. Removed from it, they have nothing left. They are morally disqualified for heaven: they are alienated from all that is most essential to the happiness of heaven: they have lived only to nurture the covetousness, pride, and other selfish principles which have arrayed them against the God of heaven, and are prepared only for the revolt and rebellion of hell. It must be so also according to the principles of the divine government. For a creature endowed with an intelligent and moral nature, to prefer a selfish and worldly good to the service and favor of God, is sinful, involves guilt, and calls for a retribution in wrath. "Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

In this light estimating the portion of the men of the world, we remark—1st. It is a very small portion, and this whether considered comparatively or absolutely—small manifestly when compared with the whole world—a small spot of ground—a small amount of treasure, a small store of knowledge—a small distinction of honor or sphere of influence—small also when compared with the measure of desires, for this is enlarged progressively with possession. It is a fever which, instead of being assuaged, is only inflamed by gratification, so that none are more eager of acquisition, or more dissatisfied with their condition, than those into whose bosom God pours his hid treasures. And if in this view small, how very small compared with Him in whom all fullness dwells—whom we were made to enjoy, and in whom we are freely offered an everlasting portion. It is absolutely as well as comparatively, since not all that is subject to one's command, but only that which ministers to his enjoyment, is properly his portion. "Behold," says Solomon, "that which I have seen. It is good, and comely for one to eat, and to drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor that he taketh under the sun, all the days of his life which God giveth him, for it is his portion." But how small a part of a man's possessions consists in that which he can eat, or drink, or apply in any other way to his personal enjoyment, except as it may be used by him in subservience to a better portion—his enjoyment in glorifying God, and doing good. All the rest is not his portion, but his encumbrance, and his care, perverted to the gratification of foolish and hurtful lusts, or applied by the overruling hand of God through him as a portion to others, his servants, his laborers, or his connections in society, or in business—a portion nominally less, perhaps, but often really more valuable, because conducive to a higher good, than his own.

2dly. It is an unsatisfying portion. It is unsatisfactory because it is so limited. The mind was made for the enjoyment of God—the infinite good; and cannot be satisfied with meaner things. So experience has a thousand times decided, as in the case of Solomon, after the longest trial and the best advantages. The richest confluence of worldly good, with the highest wisdom in applying it, is infinitely too limited to give rest to a mind, made after God's image, for communion with God. It is unsatisfying, also, because it is alloyed. Worldly good is not unmingled, and ordinarily those who have the greatest abundance have cares and anxieties proportionably great. The seasons mock their cherished hopes; the changes of trade break their golden dreams; the moth consumes, or rust corrupts, or wind, or hail, or fire, or rain, or floods destroy their wealth. Or if riches increase, they are increased that eat them, and they also that invade them—and they who are needed to gather and secure them: and the disappointments, perplexities and losses, occasioned by the unfaithfulness, or the incompetency, or the misfortunes of those on whom they depend, or other causes innumerable, which no wisdom can foresee or prevent. Faith may cast these burdens upon the Lord: but the men of the world have no arm on which to cast them—they must themselves bear them, and the humble poor with their limited means and lighter cares, little know how oppressive these often are. But more especially unsatisfying is worldly good, because it cannot meet the wants and woes of men as sinful, dying, and accountable. "Hear this, all ye people," the word of God impressively calls: "give ear all ye inhabitants of the world: both low and high: rich and poor together. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches: none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should live forever and not see corruption." Not all his treasure can buy off disease, or break the violence of pain: or bribe away the messenger of death: or solace the pangs of separation, or heal the guilty conscience, or dispel the horrors of the tomb. It is totally inadequate for those wants compared with which all others are unworthy of an anxious thought. It leaves their possessors as it finds them, fallen, guilty, perishing, exposed daily to death and judgment, and therefore wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Instead of relieving, it aggravates their real maladies. It elates them with the pride of self-sufficiency, and hides from them their real wretchedness, and so prevents their becoming truly rich, until at last their case becomes irremediable, and the disclosure of it the more tremendous and overwhelmimg. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation as in a moment. They are utterly consumed with terrors.

3dly. It is transitory. This is too obvious in view of all that has been said to need further illustration, and yet it is too important to be passed without distinct recognition.

They have their portion in this life : and what is this life? It is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. They themselves, however, are to exist forever: and having had their good things here, they have no more a portion forever. To-day full of anxiety on account of some unfavorable turn of affairs, or full of exultation at the success of their plans, and to-morrow overwhelmed with horrors at the notice of approaching death, with no preparation for the event, and no power of escape :—all their acquisitions to be relinquished, and remembered by them only as the price at which they sold immortal blessedness. "O Lord! deliver my soul from the wicked—from men of the world, which have their portion in this life!"

Who of us, my hearers, belong to the class that is thus described? Who of us, as distinguished from the people of God, are men of the world? Whose thoughts tend to the things of this world, and not to the things of God? Whose feelings are interested, whose desires and regrets, hopes and fears, joys and griefs are excited by worldly incidents and objects, and not by the objects and concerns of the spiritual and eternal world? Whose converse with kindred minds flows easily and naturally, as water from a fountain, out of the abundance of worldly thoughts and affections within, and not from the fullness of spiritual knowledge and experience? Whose conduct is decided by respect to the interests, opinions, customs, and friendships of the present world, and not by a regard to God the Redeemer, a judgment to come, and the recompense of the reward?

Such naturally are we all—and it would be wonderful if many in a congregation like this were not such still—and some who hope and profess to be different. To be really no longer of the world while we are in it; to be no more governed by its spirit, conformed to its principles, or devoted to its ends; to be transformed in the renewing of our minds, to be walking by faith, to be living to God;—looking to things eternal, and setting our affections on things above, is no slight thing; and to set it down that such is our own experience if we are not conscious that it is really so, is a horrible delusion. A speculative conviction—a transient impression—a hope—a profession—a nominal and even respectable standing in the church, cannot prove that we are not of the world. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is the word of the great Teacher, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Whose experience and life prove him by this standard to be not of the world, but called out of the world? Whom will Christ acknowledge as such when the world will have passed away, and the lusts thereof? The test may seem to some *of you* severe; but I did not make and I cannot alter it. It is established by the word of God; "and who may abide the day of his coming?"

Have you indeed received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that ye may know the mercies that are freely given you of God? Then never envy the men of the world however God may fill their bosoms with his treasures. Rather pity them that they have so poor a portion: and the more because they refuse a better—immortal beings choosing a portion in this life—a portion so unsatisfying, embittered with so many anxious cares and tumultuous passions; affording them so little solace under the ills of life, and leaving them comfortless to the miseries of eternity. O! let the bowels of your compassion be moved for them, however any of them, in the pride of their elevation, may scorn or tread upon you. Let the consideration of the restlessness of their lives, and the miseries of their end, subdue every feeling of resentment, and turn all repining thoughts into prayers for their repentance; and above all constrain you so to live as to convince them that you believe there is a better portion, and have made choice of it. And oh! "Ye men of the world"—

———Ye hungry, starving souls,
That feed upon the wind,
And vainly strive with earthly toys
To fill the immortal mind—

I exhort you to consider these things.

My object in urging them I freely acknowledge is to make you unhappy; to make you discontented with your portion; to make you dissatisfied with yourselves—for unless you become so, in this world, you will be so most intensely and desperately in the next. Until you are utterly and absolutely dissatisfied to be men of the world, you will never be in earnest for a change. Cleaving to a portion here, you will be careless of a portion hereafter. I pray you, therefore, think of these things; and if they make you unhappy, let them put you upon seeking a happiness which they will not disturb. If there is any truth or importance in these things; if you have any concern in them; if the things which await you as accountable and immortal beings make haste, and you have any thing to do that you may secure a good part, that shall not be taken from you—a treasure in the heavens that will not fail—then I entreat you think on these things. If you find it difficult to think on them—to get deep and influential impressions of them, be the more alarmed at your state, strive the more earnestly, with the more determined purpose, and the more agonizing prayerfulness against the worldliness that is destroying you, think on these things—think on them till they have the character of realities in your minds—think on them till you feel and act in regard to them, as your reason and conscience approve.

These, indeed, are not the only things that claim your earnest thoughts. Were there no other, I would not have said a word to you of them. Were there not a better portion—a portion large as your desires, and lasting as the mind, I would leave you cleaving to the world while you can enjoy it.

But, "See," is the call of God himself, "I have set before you life and death—therefore choose life that you may live." He offers himself to be your Portion, and calls upon you to choose him as such. He demands that you give him your hearts, and promises that he will be your God. He invites you to make his service your delight, and engages to make your wants his care. Though you are sinful, he calls you to his throne of grace, confessing your sins, and promises freely for Christ's sake to forgive you. Though you are blind and weak, and tempted, he bids you come to him, and he in Christ will be your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Will you then hesitate? Will you put your trust in this vain world, and not in the God who made and redeemed you? Will you set your affections on those things that are on the earth, and not on those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? Will you turn your backs on the proffered love of the Infinite God, and the melting invitation of a bleeding Saviour, and the everlasting glories of his heavenly kingdom, that you may spend your inch of time in the lust of the flesh—the lust of the eyes and the pride of life? Oh! come this day—this hour obey the persuasive call. Come—come yield yourselves to God. Say, What have I to do any more with idols? Lord, I give myself to thee. Truly I am thy servant—I am thy servant. Thou hast loosed my bonds.

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SERMON DCXXXI.

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THE PORTION OF THE SAINTS.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord."—Psalm cxix. 57.

So said Holy David. So ought we every one to be prepared to say. To every living man God offers himself in the Gospel as his portion, and it is the highest duty as it is also the highest felicity of every one to accept the offer. To impress you with this, I would show *in what sense God is the portion of his people, and how as such he is distinguished from every other portion.*

I. In what sense God is the portion of his people. The *portion* of any one is that on which he depends for his happiness; the object of his highest delight and confidence; his chief good. Moses, speaking of the division of the earth by the Most High among the posterity of Noah after the deluge, says, that this was done with reference to his design of establishing the people of Israel in the land of Canaan; and he assigns this as the reason: "For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance"—a form of expression truly remarkable. That God should be the portion of His people is not wonderful, except on account of his condescension in sustaining to them such a relation. Being offered to them in this relation, it is most reasonable that they receive and regard him accordingly. But that they should be his portion—the portion of Him "who is before all things, and by whom all things consist," and therefore can neither need them nor receive any thing from them, may well excite our admiration. But when we consider that they are the only part of mankind who are voluntarily subservient to his praise, and whom he *can* regard with delight, the declaration, though not on that account the less gracious, is more intelligible. Though all the world is his, the children of Israel were, and the church of the redeemed now is, separated by his grace, from the rest of mankind, especially for his service and praise; and as such is the object of his peculiar delight, his "treasure," his "inheritance," his "portion." "Know ye, that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." So among men, although one may have other possessions, that which he especially depends upon and values, is his portion. It may be his farm, or the emolument of his office, or his treasures; or it may be a friend, parent, husband, guardian, child. There is a widow desolate and poor. She has neither house, nor land, nor treasure—nothing of this kind that she can call her own. But she has an only son; he is of age, and is all that her hopes had promised—dutiful, healthful, active, prudent, successful. He, under God, is her provider and protector, her solace and joy. He is her earthly portion—a portion better than houses, or lands, or gold, since he is not only all *that* to her which these could be, and without the care of them, but as he is a partaker of the same intelligent and immortal nature with herself, and bound to her by ties that are peculiar to that nature. In him she has a delight which only mind in mind is capable of enjoying, and this, as the case may be, although he is far from her sight, on the other side of the globe, and communicating with her only in such methods as society has established. You may well imagine how peculiarly she regards him; how much he is present to her in thought; how affectionately he dwells in her heart; with what delight she leans upon him; how satisfied she is with her lot, so far as earthly things can give satisfaction, while she knows of his welfare, and what a wilderness the world would be to her were she to hear of his death. All this you understand; and you have only to put the living God in the place of such an earthly friend, that you may as well understand in what sense God is the portion of his people.

"The Lord appeared unto Abraham in a vision, saying, Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." Observe the form of this language. It is much more than saying, "I ensure thee protection, and will give thee a reward." It imports that he himself, the Almighty God, would be his protection and reward, interposing himself between Abraham and every threatening danger, and becoming himself the object of his complete and everlasting joy. To the same purpose he afterwards revealed himself to Abraham as the *Almighty*, that is, the All-sufficient God—and commanding him to walk before him and be perfect, subjoined, "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Whatever he was in himself as God, that he would be to Abraham and his seed. He would be "their God;" his wisdom would be theirs to guide and counsel them; his power would be theirs to protect and succor them; his goodness would be theirs to supply and comfort them; his dominion would be theirs to overrule all things for their good; and the glories of his infinite nature would be theirs to satisfy their eternal confidence and delight. The condition of the promise *was*, that they should walk before him, and be *perfect*, not in the sense of sinlessness, but of sincerity: that they should truly and practically acknowledge him as their God, should worship and glorify him, live as under his eye, aim in all things to please him, and be constant and unreserved in their belief of his word and obedience to his will.

These promises of God are made in Christ to all believers. "For is he God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also, seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith." The end of Christ in giving himself for us, the just for the unjust, was to bring us to God; and this is attained when in our justification through him his God becomes ours. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant which I made in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the house of Egypt, because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall no more teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least unto the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their iniquities will I remember no more." Such is the covenant of grace, established through Jesus Christ, with every believer according to the Gospel, by which Abraham's God becomes his God, his shield, and exceeding great reward—his present and eternal portion.

The condition of the promise is faith in God as thus revealed; the Almighty, Most Holy, and Most Merciful Lord and Judge of his people; faith in Christ as the atoning sacrifice, the accepted Mediator, the Divine and sufficient Redeemer of those who come unto God by Him; that faith by which a sinner, a rebel, becomes as Abraham was, "the friend of God," yields himself to him, depends upon him and walks before him as his Father and God, with the governing desire and purpose of obeying and serving him. Or it is choice of him as thus revealed, faith consisting most essentially in our receiving and depending upon him, as in Christ freely offered to be our God. With this intent, Joshua said to the assembled tribes at Shechem, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord; and if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And to the same purpose the Apostle to the Gentiles said, "We then are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

You see then, in what sense God is the portion of his people, and how he becomes their portion. He is such as he is their God, or, in the more expressive language of the covenant, he is a God *to* them, whatever he is in himself that he is to them for their protection and happiness, and he becomes such to them on their believing in him for this purpose, or their choice of him, and cleaving to him, in the rejection of all rival and incompatible objects.

This last particular, *believing* in him, or *choosing* and *cleaving* to him, as offered in the Gospel, may need some farther illustration, a mistake here being fatal. Let me then call your attention to it in a few distinct remarks:

1st. Taking God for our portion, we make him the object of our supreme desire. We are endowed with susceptibilities of enjoyment from other objects. They were made to be *enjoyed*, and of course to be desired. But we naturally fix on these our supreme—our governing desire. We love the creature more than the creator. Thus alienated from the living God, we go knocking at the door of every idol temple, asking, "Who will show us any good?" But coming to ourselves we learn the folly of this. We feel the vanity of earthly good as a portion for a dying accountable being. We are also convinced of the extreme sinfulness of this—the guilt of a reasonable, moral being, with the knowledge of God, preferring to him the creatures which he has made; we are impressed with his claims to our affections, and fear his just wrath for our sin; and, seeing the way opened for our return to him, we admire the wisdom, holiness, and grace of the provision, and, confiding in his overtures, we every one say, "What have I to do with idols? Lo, we are of the generation that seek after God; to know and glorify him, to enjoy his presence and favor, and be conformed to his holiness; to do his will and be assured of everlasting nearness to him and communion with him; to have "this God for our guide until death, and our God for ever and ever," is in our view, the substance of all good. The sentiment of our hearts is that of David: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on the earth that I desire beside thee." "As the heart panteth for the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God—the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

2d. Taking God for our portion, we make him the object of our ultimate confidence. Fixing on him our supreme desire, we are assured by him that he will meet and satisfy that desire. "Because he hath set his love on me," is his word to us in that case, "therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and show him my salvation." Believing the promise, we make him our confidence according to it, we depend on his wisdom to guide, his power to protect, and his goodness to forgive, to sanctify, to sustain, and eternally bless us; and, in this confidence, we surrender ourselves to the disposal of his providence and the guidance of his word. There is indeed a subordinate confidence due to other objects, as voluntary agents in his kingdom, and means of his goodness, but on him as the source of all which they receive, is our ultimate dependence. God is our refuge and strength; to Him we repair, and pour out our hearts in every thing; by prayer and supplication we make known to him our requests, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

3d. Taking God for our portion we rest in him as our chief joy. It is not the part of true religion to despise common blessings. They are given to be enjoyed; and when received religiously with thanksgiving, certainly they are not on that account enjoyed the less. Christians enjoy their family connections, their social circles, and all the circumstances of comfort and of privilege not less, but far more, than those whose portion is in this life. It is not by their disrelish of earthly good, they are weaned from the world, but by their superior enjoyment of God. Tenderly as they love their friends, and pleased as they may be with the other gifts of Providence, they love God more; and proportioned to their love to him, and their confidence in him, is their enjoyment of him. If the possession or expectation of any good gives joy, and proportioned to its apprehended value, what must be supposed to be the joy of those who carry with them the blessed assurance that the living God is their God. There may be less of rapture and ecstacy in their joy, but how much more of stability and satisfaction! in the sense of his presence and glory, in the exercises of communion with him, and the work of serving and glorifying him; in the consciousness of his smiles, and the assurance that he will be their God forever and ever; they have a peace which passeth understanding. Are they in prosperity? they say, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, for thou hast put joy and gladness into our hearts more than in the time that their corn and their wine are increased." Are they in affliction? they say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall there be fruit in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "They joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom they have received the atonement, and therefore they rejoice in Christ also, with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Thus the Lord, the living God as revealed in Christ, the covenant God of his people, and as received by them according to his offers, becomes their portion, the object of their choice, their supreme desire, confidence, and joy.

All this, as I hardly need to say, is attended with imperfection, of which, in the trials of life, they are painfully conscious. Too much are their desires, their confidence, and their joy engaged by worldly things, or at least too feebly and inconstantly are they centred in God. Still he is the object of their supreme affections. He, in distinction from all inferior good, is their portion. I would now show:

II. *How as such he is distinguished from every other portion.*

1st. God is the only *sufficient* portion. There is no other of which we can say in the possession of it, "We have all and abound." The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Riches cannot supply all want, nor honor fill all desires, nor pleasure dispel all anxiety and woe. There is no earthly friend that is adorned with all the excellence, or that is possessed of all the resources, or whose love and friendship have all the constancy and permanency, or on whom we may depend for counsel, sympathy, and support, with all the security that we might desire. The created universe, were it at our command, would be insufficient to meet our wants, as sinful and accountable; and, apart from the good will of Him on whom it depends, is of no account. Creatures the most excellent, as objects of ultimate confidence, like the idols of the heathen, are vanity; "in the day of his visitation they perish." "The portion of Jacob is not like them. He is the former of all things, the Lord of Hosts is his name." He who has this Glorious Being for his friend and portion, has all things. He has all the good which creatures are capable of affording him; for under the government of God, "all things shall work together for good, to them that love him;" and in God he has infinitely more than all "that he can desire or comprehend:" power, wisdom, goodness, dominion, honor, and glory, infinite and eternal, for all these are engaged to make him blessed. There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He, and only He, is sufficient for us, and particularly as the God of our salvation, to forgive our sins, redeem our souls, and bring us, ransomed from the grave and from hell, to that perfection in body and in spirit—that exceeding and eternal blessedness in himself that will fill and satisfy our expanding desires forever.

2d. God is the only *sure* portion. Whatever else we may desire is uncertain in the attainment, as well as insufficient in the possession. But few, after all their toil, attain the prize of riches: fewer still are extensively known in the heraldry of fame; of the votaries of pleasure also, what multitudes there are who "mourn at the last when their flesh and body are consumed;" and in our earthly friends, as well as possessions, how variously we are liable to disappointment! What indeed are the eager multitudes who are seeking happiness in worldly things, but, according to the description given of them by the prophet, "as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh; but he awaketh, and his soul hath appetite?" But how different is the case of those who seek their happiness in God! Here "every one that seeketh findeth." Here is a portion as sure in the possession, to those who make choice of it, as it is sufficient in the enjoyment. It costs nothing. The poor may have it as well as the rich; for there is no respect of persons with God. The greatest number may enjoy it as freely and as surely as the least. There is no occasion for competition in the pursuit of it, except that of loving one another, as Christ hath loved us, nor for fear of exhaustion on account of the multitudes who apply; for with God is the fountain of life—"in his presence is fullness of joy—and at his right hand are pleasures forever more." The most *sinful and miserable*, as well as the most poor and destitute, are welcome; for "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Their miseries move his compassion; iniquities he waits freely to forgive; and his word is *pledged that* whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," the call is, "come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat —yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

3d. God is the only *unfailing* portion. Riches make to themselves wings as an eagle, and fly away. Honor is not less fleeting. Friends also sicken and die; and we ourselves are frail, as are the earthly objects of our confidence. "All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The wind passeth over it and it is gone." But God is the same. Unchangeable in himself, he is unchangeably the portion of those who make him their trust. Their choice of him is a fruit of his own everlasting love to them, and therefore he binds them to himself in cords of love, that will endure to everlasting. They have chosen him as their portion forever, and the covenant of his grace, in which he engages himself to them, provides that it shall be according to their choice. Never shall they depart from him, and never will he leave or forsake them. He will be their guide until death. Here is the crowning excellence of the believer's portion—that while it is large as his desires, it is lasting as the soul. The worldling lies down upon the bed of death, and with despairing apprehensions waits the sentence, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things." The Christian lies down, and says, "My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

In application of these thoughts, let me propose two inquiries.

1st. Who of you can truly say as David did—"Thou art my portion, O Lord." To you, in the condescension of his grace, he offers himself, as he was offered to David for this purpose; and with clearer light, and more abundant love, in Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, the propitiation for our sins, risen from the dead, making intercession for us, and bringing life and immortality to light; and, from the first moment of your capacity, has never ceased to invite you to receive him as your Saviour and Lord. But have you listened to his voice? Have you acceded to his proposals? Have you turned from idols to the living God? Is he above all others the object of your desire? the knowledge of him, above all other knowledge; communion with him, above all other communion; the adorning of his holiness, above all other adorning; the guidance of his counsel, above all other guidance; employment in his service, above all other employment; salvation through grace, above all other salvation; and his favor, through the blood of the cross, above the favor of the universe beside? Do you depend on him, according to his word, to meet these desires—to guide you by his counsel, enlighten you by his Spirit, sustain you by his providence, comfort you with his presence, and save you by his grace; and, in this confidence, do you repair to him in your wants, cast your burdens on his arm, and commit yourselves to his disposing hand? Desiring him above all other objects of desire, do you depend on him to be to you what you desire? and, depending on him, do you rejoice in him above all other objects of rejoicing; and do you show that this is the case, by your serenity of mind when worldly delights fail you, and by your voluntary surrender of worldly interests when these come into competition with his will? When David said, "Thou art my portion, O Lord," he added, as the consequence of his choice and the proof of his sincerity, "*I have said that I will keep thy words.*" Have you the same evidence of sincerity? Can you say to him in sincerity and truth, "I will keep thy words?" Here, after all, is the decisive test of our real desires. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." Whom, according to this test, have we for our portion? What object gains our active obedience—our devoted service—God or mammon?

2d. Who of you will now make the choice of David, and say, "Thou art my portion, O God?" Many persons, at one time or another, in view of such considerations as I have now presented to you, have done this—many who before had taken up with a portion in this life—and you all have the same need of doing this as they had, and are under the same obligation. And will you hesitate whether the living God or this world shall be your portion? He is willing to be yours, and his terms are not hard. Though you have rejected and offended him, still the overture is "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord." And are you immortal beings, within a few years to take a final leave of all things below, and enter on a state of eternal retribution, and have you now the opportunity of securing in the friendship of God, a blessed immortality, and will you refuse his friendship? Think of the guilt as well as the folly of this—the immeasurable guilt of treating with this neglect and ingratitude, the God who formed, and the Saviour who died for you; of turning your backs on his invitations, hardening your hearts under his calls, trampling under foot his precious blood, contemning his authority, his justice, his grace, and in this manner, not only cutting yourselves off from the inheritance of the just, but ensuring to yourselves a portion with unbelievers in eternal sorrow. Why will any of you do this? Why will you die? Most assuredly the hour is on the wing, when you will *feel* this world to be as fleeting and vain as you now know it to be—when God, as the portion of the soul, will *appear* to you to be as needful, and without him will be *found* to be as miserable, as your consciences now admonish you is the truth of the case. Why then will you not obey the truth? Why will you not yield to this first law of heaven? "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Why will you not arise and go to your Father? Your opportunity will not always remain. To some of you it may be closed soon. Soon death may come, and then there will be no space for repentance. Consider these things, O ye who are living without God in the world I have set before you this day life and death, the portion of the men of this world, and the portion of the saints. The one or the other of these will be the final portion of every one, and the choice of every one in his own case will have decided it. Now, then, compare them, and choose for yourselves. They are before you, and now let reason and conscience decide. May you know in this your day the things which belong to your peace! God is waiting—Christ is interceding—the Spirit is pleading—and all heaven cries, "O that they were wise—that they understood this—that they would consider their latter end!"

GOD OUR PORTION HERE AND HEREAFTER.

God my supporter and my Hope,
My Help forever near,
Thine arm of mercy held me up,
When sinking in despair.

Thy counsels, Lord, shall guide my feet
Through this dark wilderness;
Thine hand conduct me near thy seat,
To dwell before thy face.

Were I in heaven without my God,
'Twould be no joy to me;
And while this earth is my abode,
I long for none but thee.

What if the springs of life were broke,
And flesh and heart should faint,
God is my soul's eternal Rock,
The Strength of every saint.

Behold, the sinners, that remove
Far from thy presence, die;
Not all the idol gods they love
Can save them when they cry.

But to draw near to thee, my God,
Shall be my sweet employ;
My tongue shall sound thy works abroad,
And tell the world my joy.

SERMON DCXXXII.

BY REV. DAVID DOBIE,

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FEAR OF CONTAGION AND DISEASE.

"Every house is shut up that no man may come in."—Isaiah xxiv. 10.

From the context it would seem these words are intended to describe the state of things in a city during a famine, or the prevalence of some very fatal and contagious disease. At such times there is a state of feeling, common to all, which it may be profitable to study, that we may the better ascertain the restraints whereby it ought to be controlled. We read of those who take no precautions against the pestilence, even when it is raging with terrible destructiveness. They satisfy themselves with saying, that if they are decreed to die by the plague, they will so die—it is the will of God! But this is an exception to the common sense of the world. Acting on the natural love of life, which God has implanted within them, men are generally disposed to avoid disease, and every evil whereby their health or life may be endangered.

The wisdom of this law of self-preservation is very manifest. If it were not a law of man's nature, and if mankind were not every hour more or less under its influence, there would be scenes of woe, even in this miserable world, which, in all its wretchedness, it has never so much as imagined. The Creator foresaw this when he made man; and he made self-preservation one of the primary laws of his being—one of the most sacred, necessary, and useful laws of the human mind. It is the divinely sanctioned principle which underlies all human laws—the basis of all right enactments protecting health, reputation, property, and life in the body politic. And it is because God approves of the principle, that his approval extends to these enactments, and the authority by which they are enforced: "Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Thus God throws his shield over the life and well being of his creature: and whoever undermines my health, blasts my reputation, invades my property, or endangers my life—commits an offence which God will avenge. This law is also a guide in respect to pursuits in life. It teaches what to adopt and what to avoid. Any pursuit, the legitimate tendency of which is adverse to the health or morals of men, is essentially bad, through the force of this law. The trade in intoxicating liquor comes under this condemnation. It is properly of the nature of suicide; and there is no more wisdom in granting it license than there is in allowing a madman to possess the instruments by which he will take his own life, or that of his keeper. It is a trade to be prohibited and put down, as we would extinguish a conflagration and punish the incendiary. It is also worthy of remark that the law of self-preservation is the basis of all encouragements given to science—especially to the science of preventing and healing disease. Every discovery and improvement in medical skill is so much more towards the preservation of human life, and is hailed with satisfaction by all. The same thing is true of education and the diffusion of knowledge. By these means men's minds are enlightened and aroused to avoid whatever is noxious to health and life.

Heathenism places little value on human life. The same thing has been observed in reference to infidelity, whose reign was the reign of murder. To the praise of Christianity be it recorded, that one of its invariable influences, in all lands, is to throw around life a sacred inviolability, not to be removed, save in the most desperate extremity. He that attacks life, attacks the very foundation on which society is built. Life ranks first among things to be protected. Every man feels that there are good reasons for this from the very instincts of nature. Both reason and revelation show that life is man's most sacred interest; and this is the ground on which precautions against contagion and disease are justifiable. No instruction or persuasion is necessary in such circumstances; an intimation that men are in danger is enough; you need not persuade them to "*shut up the house* that no man may come in." Let them know that contagion is in their path, and they will quickly flee. The very face of their friend will be a terror to them. They will not inhale the faintest breath. It was imposed upon lepers in ancient times, on approaching any person not afflicted with their disease, to cry, "Unclean! unclean!" as the condition of their being permitted to live. Men are everywhere alive to the instincts which enacted that ancient law. Let the plague break out, and what a sensation is produced. What trembling at the bare possibility of being exposed! What abstinence from former gratifications! What suspicion in every look! What scrupulous precautions, such as at other times would hardly be endured! It is necessary to see this state of things, to know the full extent of what men will do. Business is suspended. The once thronged streets are still as the grave. Music ceases in the halls of the rich. Mirth is reproved, where once it was a virtue. Every man thinks how he may for a certainty preserve himself from the breath of the destroyer. The precious bonds of society verily seem on the eve of dissolution. How thankful we ought to be that such seasons visit us but very seldom. Yet they do come, and we are compelled to know what it is to dread contagion. As this dread may easily become inordinate, and lead to the very evils which it seeks to shun, it is the object of the present discourse to point out some of the principles by which it should be controlled.

I. The fear of contagion and disease should never be indulged without the distinct recognition that disease and all its causes are under the immediate and all-wise superintendence of God. Unless we bear this in mind, our fear will certainly overstep its proper limits. If we lose sight of the great fact that God reigns and rules over all that pertains to life and its continuance, we must of necessity do wrong, by rushing into conduct and sentiments also, wholly at variance with the honor of God and hurtful to our own peace. A sense of His presence and an assurance of His protecting hand is especially needful when death has entered our windows; when the pestilence is abroad, destroying its thousands—filling every house with fear, lamentation and woe. Our fear of contagion is instinctive, and springs from the law of self-preservation implanted within us, and it is therefore not to be wholly suppressed, but it should always be moderated with the assurance that all the resources of wisdom and power are at God's command, and that he can defend and save us from disease and from all its causes. On this point we ought not to entertain a moment's doubt. "I will say of the Lord, He is my fortress; my God, in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."

II. The fear of contagion should never interfere with the duties of humanity. The infirm should be cared for; the aged and the young protected; the sick should be ministered to; the dead buried; and those in danger, faithfully warned. All this is required by the golden rule, of doing to others as we would they should do to us. When exposed to disease, we would wish those acquainted with the fact to warn us of our danger; when attacked with sickness, we would wish some friend to come to our aid; when sinking into the grave, overcome and vanquished by the great enemy, we would even then desire to be comforted—if but with the kind look of a fellow mortal; all this therefore ought we to render others in the day of their extremity. Life itself must be sometimes, not only offered, but actually sacrificed, on the altar of benevolence; for God has made it our duty to live, only in the discharge of duty. Life, indeed, is not to be recklessly thrown away, where there is no prospect of good being accomplished; but where disease is raging, every dictate of humanity demands that we attend the sick at every hazard. The case is the same where our friends are perishing in the waters, or in the fire; humanity requires that we make every exertion to save them, even at the risk of our own lives.

III. When the fear of contagion exceeds the fear of sin, then it is certainly inordinate and wrong. This must be manifest on a moment's reflection. Sin is the most dreadful evil in the universe. There is in truth no evil but itself. Sin alone provokes the wrath of God. But for sin, we might bid farewell to all our fears—all our sorrows would be but for a moment. Free from sin, we might welcome disease and death itself with joy. How glad the message, by which we are called into the presence of God and all the realities of eternity! If on the other hand we are still involved in its guilt and condemnation, how dreadful beyond expression is everything connected with the day of our death—since we are in danger of eternal ruin. But on what ground can we justify ourselves in being more afraid of disease than sin? in trembling at the thought of being exposed to sickness, while the breaking of the commandments of God gives us comparatively no concern? in shutting up the sick that they may not go out, and yet not standing in any dread of doing that which deliberately provokes the wrath of God? Let us treat things according to their merits. If sin is the greatest of all evils, then let us so regard it, and conduct ourselves accordingly. Let us ascertain from the most patient investigation, whether the infected chamber of a sick person is not more terrible to us than the unholy home of mirth and ungodliness; whether the dread of taking a disease is not more active in us than the dread of living impenitent without faith in Christ. Here is a good test of our principles—a safe criterion of our actual standing in the sight of God. Would we, as by instinct, put our hand to our mouth and hold our breath, in presence of disease, and immediately throw open our whole hearts to the influence of a moral leper, a man whose heart and life are at enmity with God? This is entirely a fair question. Do not the highest interests of our souls demand that we should prove ourselves in some such way as this? We assuredly know enough of the deceitfulness of our hearts to be already aware of the danger to which we are exposed from this very quarter. What if, on investigation, we should find that we regard contagion a more dreadful thing than the violation of the will of God? Would it be a piety worthy of the gospel if it placed the safety of the body above the glory of God? Would any of us feel prepared for the scrutiny of the last judgment, if our devotion to our Saviour rose no higher—that we would flee from infection at the first warning, and yet show no willingness to turn from sin, even at his command? But is there not good reason to believe that many who profess to believe in Christ and in the solemn realities of a coming eternity, who maintain that sin is the only evil to be shunned, are yet very inconsistent when placed in proximity to some contagious and prevailing disease? When the wind blows from an infected house, they are thrown into a panic at their danger; and yet the same persons may be found at their ease, yea, in very great self-complacency and joy, in the midst of a theatre, surrounded with, and breathing an atmosphere of spiritual death!

Now we would not deride the fear of contagion; on the contrary, it is dictated by the great first law of self-preservation; and therefore constitutional and right in its proper degree. We would not argue for presumption, when the pestilence is in the land. But we would insist that Christians at least, who show more fear of infection than of moral evil, give the world but little reason to regard them sincere in their professions of supreme devotion to the Great Master. We would insist, that as sin is a greater evil than disease of body, so it ought to command in us a corresponding dread. From its terrible contagion we should instinctively shrink, as from the horrible verge of hell. What is this fear of disease, which so soon arouses every soul in the population of a crowded city as with the blast of a trumpet, but the dread of going into the presence of God to render up an account of our deeds? And would we cherish such a state of mind were we really at peace with God, living in all good conconscience in the keeping of his commandments? Would the bare mention of the plague all but quench our faith in the providence and goodness of God, if we were longing to be with God in the blessed fellowship of heaven? If sin were seen by us in its true character; if we entertained proper views of God's feelings towards it; if we would allow ourselves to understand its effect upon our own happiness—would we so easily err, in preferring sin to affliction?

In conclusion, we may learn,

1. That our duty to God takes precedence of every other duty. Such is the order signified in the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,

with all thy heart; and thy neighbor as thyself." In all times of special exposure to sickness and death, this sentiment ought to be engraven on our hearts.

2. All inordinate fear of disease is wrong, and therefore to be avoided as a transgression of the law of God. Such fear distrusts the goodness of God—disregards the duties which we owe to others—and is at variance even with our own health and welfare. We ought therefore by all means to guard against this sin.

3. A heart right with God is the best preparation for every event. If our heart be right with God, it will be at peace with our fellow men—it will be full of faith in Christ, and of comfort in the Holy Spirit—it will be humble, resigned, and happy. This is an asylum for every hour of danger—once fairly in it, no evil can befall us. Those whom the Lord keeps are perfectly safe. "Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him." O let his solemn voice, in these times of death, be heard in our inmost souls! It is an awful warning which his providence is now giving us all. Though it seems to speak in severity, it speaks in love. It bids us remember our latter end—the vanity of all earthly pursuits—the certainty of death—and the retributions of the judgment day. It bids the wavering to decide; the backslider to return to God; the impenitent to repent; the Christian to watch; for no man knoweth "what a day may bring forth."

4. We ought not to murmur against God. Alas! did he deal with us according to our sins, we should all be cut down as cumberers of the ground. Look at the obligations which have been laid upon us in the gospel of Christ, and how wretchedly we have fulfilled them; at the temporal blessings conferred upon us, and how we have abused them; at the patience and compassion which God has so long shown towards us—the years of forbearance and mercy which he has given us to enjoy, and how thoughtlessly we have allowed them to run to waste! Instead of preparing to die, we have too often done the very opposite—we have made ourselves unfit to live. Let us not murmur, then, if God comes forth in his inscrutable sovereignty and teaches us the great lesson that our life is in his hands, and that he will recall it when it shall please him so to do. Be this the willing sentiment of every heart—"Thy will, O God, be done, on earth as it is in heaven." My life I place at thy disposal; that it may be consecrated for ever in all its powers to thy service grant through Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

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SERMON DCXXXIII.

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THIS WORLD NOT OUR PLACE OF REST.

"Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted.—MICAH ii. 10.

THE world we live in, is in some respects a beautiful world, and in some respects desirable as a place of residence; and hence so many regard it as their portion—their home; and never seek for a better habitation. But this our planet, though *measurably* fair, is nevertheless scarred, and though there are comforts here, there are crosses and trials here, and it is not the place designed by our Creator for the place of our rest. And when he sees us thinking that it is, acting as if it was, setting our hearts upon it, devoting ourselves to its pleasures, its honors, and its gains, as though there was nothing more valuable, as though he had not provided something more suitable and satisfying for the immortal spirit; his voice to us in the stirring appeal of the text, is, "*Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted.*"

That this world was never intended by our Heavenly Father to be the place of our rest, is apparent from the following considerations.

1. Because *our stay here is so short and uncertain.*

The apostle asks, "What is your life?" and then, answering his own question, says: "It is a vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." "The moment we begin to live we all begin to die." Three score years and ten, or fourscore years, and these tabernacles of ours, not formed of strong and lasting materials, such as brass, iron, or stone, but formed of clay, and hence called "earthly houses," whose "foundation is in the dust," sink, fall, dissolve, and moulder away. A wind passes over them and they are gone, housed in the grave! And the *time* when they will thus go, is as uncertain as the span of their continuance here, is short. "Man knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." Navigating the ocean of life, they know not the storm destined to wreck them upon its bosom, nor the nearness of that advancing wave which is to reach them and settle over them for ever. Pope Adrian was deprived of life by a knat; an illustrious Roman counsellor by a hair; Anacreon, the renowned Grecian poet, by the seed of a grape; the Emperor Charles VI. by a mushroom; and thousands more, have found in a flying atom, an insect, or a passing breeze, what has "changed their countenance and sent them away." "In the midst of life we are in death." And is such a world as this, where our stay is so brief and precarious, where all ages and classes are alike liable to the sudden and unsparing stroke of the great destroyer, where they are crushed before the moth—die from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, the banners of death waving in the sunlight and night air—is this the place of our *rest?* Did our Creator *intend* it as such? No; these decaying bodies, the urned ashes of our deceased relatives and friends, the buried dust of ages, our globe one vast burying ground, the sepulchre of life to its once busy, bustling millions, say, *no!* "*this is not your rest.*"

2. Again. This appears from the fact, that there are *so many vicissitudes, labors, disappointments, and sorrows here.* Not only "have we no continuing city" here, but even while we are here, we are subject to serious evils. Both the rational spirit, and the material frame in which it dwells, are called to suffer. "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks to fly upward." "Though a man live many years and rejoice in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they are many. Numerous are the severe and humbling diseases to which flesh is liable, and many are preyed upon by these diseases—lying down on beds of languishing and pain. Numerous are the personal and domestic trials to which humanity is exposed, and many are daily encountering these trials. *Here,* one finds that he has misplaced his affections, and is suffering the pangs of a wounded heart; *there,* the bright hopes which one has been cherishing are overcast with clouds. *Here,* those who have commanded luxuries, who have been in their plenty, utter strangers to scenes of want and destitution, are by a sudden blow reduced to poverty and are wearing the wan look of want; and *there,* the King of Terrors has entered the sparkling circle, invaded the fireside and

table, snatched from thence a darling one, and survivors, bowed in sorrow, are mourning their loss. Thus, as the inevitable lot of our race on the earth, the law of their being here below, as a necessary part of the circumstances of their existence, there are trials, sore trials. And is such a place—a place of pains and tears, misfortunes, disappointments, and bereavements, designed by him who made us, to be the place of our *rest?* No; "this is *not* your rest."

3. Again. *There is nothing here which is a sufficient portion for the soul.* The Father of spirits has given us a spirit which spurns the dust. Though imprisoned in walls of clay, it is not *itself* of clay, but is immaterial and immortal. Such being its nature, it requires for its adequate portion, a spiritual, durable something, congenial to its *own* nature. But that something is not found on this planet. Go to pleasure, go to wealth, go to fame, go to all which earth can minister or bestow, which is soothing, refreshing, and sustaining, and you cannot in any of them, or all of them, find what the soul of man needs, to fill and satisfy it. "The height says it is not in me, and the depth says it is not in me." The soul hungers for food, which earth has not provided, and thirsts for drink which earth has not furnished. There flows not in all the vallies and channels of this world, a stream from whence man, by drawing, can quench the illimitable desires of the spirit within him. All things are too contracted, too sensual, too vain, too empty for his complete satisfaction. He cannot find in them rest. The soul—the breath of God—divine, from the skies—the soaring, towering spirit, can no more feed on ashes and be filled, than could the prodigal be filled "with the husks that the swine did eat." They were not *intended* for its portion, and are *not* its portion. It cannot rest in them as such. It pants for something nobler, higher, more substantial, something above earth. "This is *not your rest.*"

4. Again. This world is not our rest, because *of the prevalence here of sin*, or in the language of the text, "*because it is* POLLUTED." Polluted by sin. Sin has not only entered it, but scarred it, blasted it; poisoned its sources of happiness, tainted its air, corrupted its society. It is a world unfavorable to spirituality of mind, unfavorable to a devotional temper, unfavorable to growth in grace. It is a world which has forsaken God, and the wickedness which prevails in it—the pride, ambition, envy, jealousy, hatred, and revenge, which are here, are impressive melancholy commentaries on the fact. Not a holy being is to be found on the length and breadth of the globe; the best creature is but imperfectly sanctified, while the majority, the great majority are rebels against their creator; carry about in their hearts debasing passions, and have a supreme relish for the joys of sense and sin. Satan is here; it is peculiarly his province; here he spreads his nets; here he diffuses his pestilential influences, and all he can

do, and his host of emissaries can do (and their name is legion), is hostile to virtue, hostile to purity of mind, and the repose of the soul. A place so contaminated by sin, deeply, universally, fatally contaminated, a person cannot even *pass through* without danger—danger of being defiled by its abominations, and cheated by its tempting illusions—danger of being entangled by it in a perilous and criminal bondage. It is surely then no place of rest. "This world is *not* your rest, for it is *polluted*" and polluting.

5. We add that this world is not our rest, because we are told that, *unless renounced, it will occasion our destruction.* The words following the text are, "it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction." "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted; *it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction.*" And can that be our rest, our portion, the centre and stay of our hopes, our substantial, satisfying possession, our supreme good, which, if we venture to make such, will prove our ruin? Impossible! And yet such is the *world.* To be conformed to it in sentiment, feeling, and conduct, is to be estranged from the vital principles of the kingdom of Christ. To love it, is to love what is antagonistical to God, and truth, and holiness. To go with its current, is to go with the unbelieving, thoughtless throng, that are posting their way down to hell. To rest in it, is to abide in a doomed city, and be involved in the destruction which is hastening upon it.

We remark, that if there is weight in these considerations—if this world was never intended by our Creator as our rest, then,

1. *We should abandon the idea that rest is to be found in it.*

A divine of the last century, in one of his pastoral communications to his people, admonishes them not to look for that in the law, which can only be found in the gospel; not to look for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; not to look for that in the creature, which is only to be found in the Creator; and not to look for that on earth, which is only to be found in heaven. Sound advice; and if we take it and act upon it, as we hope his people did, we shall not look for rest in the present world, where "all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And yet it is natural for man to do this. Finding himself in this world—the only world in which he has ever dwelt—the only world with which he has any practical acquaintance—a world which, though fallen and cursed, yet bears traces of the wisdom, goodness, and power of its Infinite Architect, and in which there are many things that promise felicity—it is natural for him to seek for a *portion* in it, and concentrate upon it his affections and desires. It is *natural* for him to do this; and yet he should *not* do it, because his nature is a depraved nature, warped from its first and true direction—because his mind is biased in favor of the sensual and temporal—because this world, all it contains, is unlike his soul, material and perishing, and there is not among its wide range of objects, its possibilities of good, what can impart genuine and permanent happiness. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," and the earth-born passions of our nature—the passions of sensuality, avarice and ambition—are never satisfied by indulgence. Rest, then, *is not here*, and we should not *suppose* that it is here. The finding of it here should be laid entirely out of our account. We should no more presume to find a suitable portion for our immortal spirits amidst these shadows of time, this earth, smitten with barrenness, because of sin, this world of disappointments, losses and distresses, of sick beds and of graves—we should no more seek for rest in such a place as this, for that spirit which the inspiration of the Almighty gave, than we should seek for snow in the bosom of the sun! The world was not intended to be our rest—is not *fit* to be our rest—*cannot* be our rest—and the sooner we abandon all hope of *making* it our rest, the better. "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest."

2. Again. If this world is not our rest, then *we should guard against whatever has a tendency to induce us to rest in it.* We have said that there was a strong propensity in our lapsed natures, not to admit, or, if we admit, not to remember, that earth furnishes no adequate good for the soul. We have said, too, that there were not a few objects here, which made many fair *promises* to this effect, held out enticing baits for us to seize, and which would draw us to trust in them and rest in them as the foundation of our happiness. But if they are *false*—as they are, for history says they are, and observation says they are, and experience says they are, and God says they are—if their pretensions are empty—if they "lead to bewilder, and dazzle to blind"—then we should shun them, and set a watch against them; since to believe them, to trust them, to take them to our hearts, 'is to embrace a phantom, and practice upon ourselves a delusion. Hence when business entices us, and pleasure entices us, and riches entice us, and offices and honors entice us, and gay associates entice us—to rest in them, claiming that they have what we want, and can give what we want, what our desires demand, what the strength of our mounting aspirations call for—we should say, *no*, vain comforters are ye all; my immortal part craves something different, something more substantial; I am an incarnate *spirit*—not corporeal alone, but spiritual also—and my illimitable mind, my ardent affections, my excursive imaginations, my thoughts that wander through eternity, embracing ages in their sweep—need a good, more immense than any creature, or all finite creatures can bestow. To that degree in which we are unwatchful, and allow ourselves to be entangled in the objects of sense and time—allow them to invite and fix upon

themselves our affections—to that degree are we *imposed* upon, and forget our true resting place.

3. Again. If the foregoing considerations have weight, *they teach us to interpret aright, afflictive dispensations of Providence.*

Their voice is but an echo of the words, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." God knows how prone we are to lay up treasure here, and has, mercifully to us, made the things of earth insufficient and empty, that we may not take up with them, and seek nothing nobler and more satisfactory. Upon all objects and acquisitions here he has impressed vanity, that their very incapacity to satisfy, their failure to fill the heart, may cause them to be relinquished, and something more excellent have the soul's choice.

There is poetry and truth in those lines of that quaint poet Herbert. "When God," says he—

"When God at first made man,
Having a fount of blessings standing by,
Let us, said he, pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

"So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flowed; then wisdom, honor, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay;
Perceiving, that alone, of all his treasure,
Rest, in the bottom lay.

"For if I should, said he,
Bestow *this* jewel *also* on my creature,
He would adore my *gifts* instead of *me;*
And rest in *nature*, not the *God* of nature;
So both should losers be.

"Yet let him keep the *others*,
But keep them with repining *restlessness;*
Let him be rich and weary; that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet *weariness*
May toss him to my breast."

That just expresses it. "If *goodness* lead him not, yet *weariness may toss him to my breast.*" God has stamped an incapacity on the things of earth, to satisfy the panting heart of man—has infused into them all an element of disquietude, that man, in his dissatisfaction with these things, his thirst for something more substantial, may come to the bosom of that God from which he has wandered. "When created comforts are embittered, or their sources dry up; when friends prove treacherous or cease to be; when pecuniary resources fly away or melt away; when earthly hopes are nipped in the bud, or blighted in the flower; God says to us, seek not repose under these decaying gourds of the world, but come under the tree of life—let me cover you with my feathers, and trust under my wings." And this is *the secret of all afflictive dispensations of Providence.* They came *not* because Jehovah delights to send them—not because "he willingly afflicts and grieves the children of men," but they come, that men may disrelish the world, be tired of it, sit loose to it, and *arise and depart* from it. His voice to every mourner, to every disappointed smitten one, is, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest." Afflicted hearer, this is God's language to *you.* Have you been called to close the eyes of a deceased parent, a beloved father or mother? has a wife or husband dear to you as your own self, been taken away from your side? has a smiling babe been torn from your arms, and consigned to the narrow house? has the strong son or fond daughter whom you had relied upon as the prop and comfort of your age, been suddenly stricken down? have you any such tale of grief to tell, or any kindred tale of hopes blasted, plans frustrated, and purposes broken off;—God's voice to you in these afflictions was, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted." He smote these comforts, to show you their vanity; he crushed these reeds on which you leaned, that you might substitute for them a rock; he broke these cisterns, that you might draw from the everlasting spring; he dashed down these fabrics of your hopes to teach, that "he builds too low, who builds beneath the skies." Yes, and a mercy it is for man that it is so, to recal his wandering affections to a forgotten God. He disturbs our rest here, that we may seek rest elsewhere; "makes earth appear to us like a desert, that our eyes may be raised with delight to the glories of heaven; as, on the barren plains of Arabia, the way-worn pilgrim looks above the desolate earth, and gazes, with solemn, silent rapture, on the lights of the firmament." Hence,

4. Again.. If this world is not our rest, then we should "*set our affections on things above,*" *and find our rest in God.*

Though *rest* is not in the *creature,* it *is* in the *Creator.* Though we travel over the globe and inquire after rest in vain, weary ourselves for very vanity; to the interrogatory, Who will show us any good? a voice from the throne of Jehovah replies, "Acquaint thyself with *me,* and be at peace." If what the spirit needs is something spiritual, that something is in God, who is a pure spirit. If what the spirit needs is something vast and immense, commensurate with its own expanded and expanding powers, that something is in God, of whom alone infinity is predicable. If what the spirit needs is something enduring, something permanent, something that stretches beyond the grave and beyond time, that something is in the everlasting one, in whose perfections are opened fields of joy where the soul can expatiate to all eternity. He has been "the dwelling-place of his people in all generations," and will be through ceaseless ages, affording them a supreme good in the perpetual effluxes of his holiness and love. Our affections then, should be "set on things *above*, not on things on the earth." Failure *here* should lead us *there*; and vexed with the sins, burdened with the labors, harrassed by the temptations, and pained with the distresses of earth, we should go to God—the God of all consolation—and say, "whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth whom I desire besides thee." "My flesh, and my heart, and the world faileth, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion forever." Such should be our convictions, such our feelings, such our conduct. Such is the work of righteousness; and "the work of righteousness," says Isaiah, "shall be *peace*, and the effect of righteousness, *quietness* and assurance forever."

Finally. If the present is not our rest, was not *designed*, is not allowed to be our rest—then we *see the infatuation and guilt of those who are taking up with it as their portion.*

They are *infatuated*, for they are in the eager pursuit of what they will never obtain—searching for a substance among shadows; and they are *guilty*, for all the time they are engaged in this pursuit, God tells them that "the friendship of the world is enmity with him;" that the world is *polluted*, and destructive to those who fix upon it their hearts.

My dear hearers, ye thoughtless, giddy throng, who, wrapped in the delusions of sense and of time, are seeking a portion and rest for your souls here below, believe me when I say, that you will never find on this earth what you are sighing for and striving for. It is not here, and it is folly to look for it here. Travellers on the wide and desert wastes of Africa inform us of a curious spectral illusion there, the *mirage*, which spreads before them tempting views of fertility and beauty, which delude the eye and cheat the heart. Such a mirage is *rest* to the pilgrim in this world. Though he has it not now, it is seemingly before him, and he is pursuing after it. But it recedes as he approaches—is never reached—is never a reality. It is a naked assumption that it is *here*. It is *not* here. "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest."

But if the consideration that your pursuit is *vain*, will not deter you from it, then believe me further when I say, that the world, unless renounced, will *destroy your soul*. "It will destroy you, even with a *sore* destruction." The world—all it contains—is destined to be destroyed; for the earth and all things therein are to be burned up. But *his* destruction, who in defiance of reason, truth, and his Maker's commands, cleaves to it, is a sorer destruction than that with which materialism is visited, for *his* is the torture of *everlasting* fire, and the corroding of the never-dying worm.

SERMON DCXXXIV.

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YOUTH THE MOST HOPEFUL SEASON WITH COMMUNITIES.*

"When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst, but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not."—JOHN xxi. 18.

THIS was said to Peter; and if we may judge from his manhood, well does it tell the tale of his early life. Of few, can it be said, with more emphasis than of him, that a capricious and headstrong will controlled the activities of that period with which his written history begins. He was ardent, rash, self-reliant, and impulsive; the master of his own powers, the contriver of his own doings, the architect of his own destiny. But time brought on a period when all this was different. His motion was slow; his efforts were inefficient and weak; he was dependent on others, and more at their disposal than his own. The buoyant and elastic step was no more; he walked not whither he would; at the command of others, he stretched forth his hands; he was attired as they pleased; he was dragged to the tribunal of the persecutor, and the death of the cross.

This passage, which gives us, as it were, at one bold dash, so much of the character and history of the great apostle of the circumcision, presents at the same time an affecting view of the contrast between youth and age as seen in the ordinary experience of man. The one is endowed with an activity, a versatile energy, a self-confident and animating hope, that belongs not to the other. It looks upon the future as its own. It counts upon the opportunity and the power of molding its own destiny — of working out a character and filling up a history that shall accord with its own preferences. The other looks upon character and habits as already stereotyped, and upon destiny as determined— as almost completed.

I. Something like the youth, the manhood, and the decay, which make up the sum of human life, is seen in the history of nations and communities of men. They have, too, their period of birth; a time when they begin to be; a time that denies them a past, and makes the future everything to them; a time when instead of memories, they have hopes; instead of history, prophetic dreams and oracles; instead of achievements, high aims and strong resolve.

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* Preached in a youthful village at the West.

To this period there attaches something of the same importance that belongs to the youth of every individual. It is the forming period—the period on which the unwritten future depends—the period that determines whether the maturity that is to succeed shall be a desirable one, or only the ripening of mortal disease—the beginning of premature age and decay.

God has not failed to give the most significant testimony to its importance. The time was, when the race of man was young, and God gave them a paradise and bowers of the tree of life. And even when sin had begun and Eden was no more, he still bestowed the most earnest culture upon the undeveloped energies of a youthful world. What volumes of admonition were uttered in that approval which he gave of the piety of Abel. So in his punishment of its opposite in Cain; and still more, in walking with Enoch on earth and taking him bodily to heaven! Here were visible displays of deity and miraculous interposition, and a longevity which man has not since known. All that the most convincing testimony, both divine and human, the most impressive miracles, the intensest culture and a long life could do to form the race for a happy maturity, was done.

But, instead of this, there came on a maturity of vice, of iniquity, of rottenness, and premature decay. And what does God do now? He sees the earth filled with violence and crime. An old age of moral decrepitude and impotence has overtaken the race of man. There is nothing hopeful or promising, as in the days of its youth—nothing to invite the cultivation that was then bestowed. All progress, is progress downward, and every token of a brighter future is withheld. Noah is commissioned to utter warnings of an impending danger. The ark which he rears in their sight is a standing intimation of coming ruin. Every story which he adds, and every timber which is brought, are vocal—prophetic of the approaching doom. The clouds gather, the storm bursts forth, the floods roll on, and the effete, worn-out, decaying mass of corruption is buried in a watery grave.

Now, what makes the difference? It is not simply, that the earth is, in the latter case, filled with violence; for in proportion to the number of its inhabitants, there was violence enough in the earth when Cain imbrued his murderous hand in his brother's blood. The difference was, that in one case the race was young, and gave the promise which especially attaches to youth, that this early waywardness would be thrown off, and all that was vicious and wrong, corrected by the culture and experience that were to succeed. And in the other case, the season of youth was past, and a premature old age of corruption and moral disease had poisoned all the streams of life and cut off the last hope of recovery or reform. There was all the difference which there is between an experiment begun and an experiment completed; between some apparent promise of success, and the result of a total failure. How striking the language in which the Most High speaks out its feelings in view of the hopeless state into which a period of less than 2,000 years had plunged the diseased mass of mankind! "I will destroy man that I have created, for it repenteth me that I have made them." "It repented the Lord," says the sacred historian, "that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."

I might trace the same great lesson in that Second Youth with which the race of man was renewed in the family of Noah. But I prefer to draw my next illustration from the youthful history of the Hebrew Commonwealth. A few centuries sufficed to bring upon the post-diluvian world, a maturity of atheistic and idolatrous corruption, from which nothing was to be hoped; and the great experiment of Providence was next renewed with a youthful fragment of the race—the single family of Abraham. And how carefully was that early bud of promise guarded and kept! What more efficient or wonderful than the discipline by which Abraham was prepared to become the father of the faithful! How paternal, and tender, and faith-inspiring the dealings of Jehovah with Isaac and Jacob and Joseph! The germ of the future nation was withheld for three successive generations, from expanding itself and throwing upwards its branches toward heaven; and this was that its radicles might have time to strike downward and reach the vital springs that never dry; that the anticipated growth might in due time be fed with full supplies from the Source of Life.

And when that growth was visibly begun, the nation in its very infancy was brought to know its dependence upon God as its deliverer from famine and bondage. And when this was found insufficient to create a proper sense of that dependence, there was added the forty years' discipline under Moses; the miracle of the cloudy and fiery pillar; the manna from heaven; the living water from the rock; the passover; the fiery serpents and the sacrifice of that entire generation of murmurers against God who were forbidden the land of promise, and whose carcases fell in the wilderness. Such were the discipline and care that were bestowed by the Most High upon his chosen people in their youth. He most aptly compares it to the efforts of the parent bird, when the time has come for her young to forsake the nest. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings," so Jehovah "led his people about, instructed them, kept them as the apple of his eye." How different was all this, a few centuries later, when the hopeful season of their youth was past! Instead of bearing with their waywardness and idolatry, how did he lift against them the threatened rod of war, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, and lay desolate their cities, and burn their temple, and send the remnant of their tribes into captivity! Mere discipline was now of no avail. The tree had become too strong by the growth of centuries for any culture to mold or to sway: and it only remained for it to be torn up by its roots and cast out into another land; and there, in process of time, a youthful scion was derived from its most vital portion and planted again in the vineyard of the Lord. Thus the youth of his people was renewed and enough of purity retained to admit of the timely ushering of the Messiah upon the stage.

II. Such is the testimony of God's early providence to the superior promise of the youthful period, in bodies or communities of men, as compared with those that are more advanced. I might bring out and illustrate several distinct elements of this superior promise, and thus show that it is in accordance with sound philosophy and general laws, that God has treated the youthful period in the history of nations and communities, as the more hopeful one. I shall confine myself to two.

1. That which presents itself first and attracts the notice of the most superficial observer, is the element of youthful enterprise. Notwithstanding the obscurity that hangs about the origin of the early nations, we can affirm, as a general truth, that with them, the period of enterprise was the period of youth. Nimrod and Semiramis reigned over a youthful people; and those were the days of enterprise in the valley of the Tigris. There was the enterprise of youthful communities in the project of Babel. Egypt, in the vigor of her youth, excavated the catacombs, built the hundred-gated Thebes, wrought collossal sculptures, hewed out monoliths, reared the towering pyramids. But when her enterprise had expended itself, she became an easy prey to the conqueror. And for nearly thirty centuries her imbecile sons have walked amid the monuments of her youthful greatness, as the traveller wends his way amid Alpine summits, with no thought that those snow-capped peaks have any lessons of human enterprise for the beholder.

Rome had a youth of republicanism and a youth of despotism; and in both she was enterprising and strong. She trode down the nations, almost at will, with her iron foot, or held them in hopeless vassalage with her giant arm. But as she became old and corrupt, her enterprise was gone. She ceased to reach abroad. She needed more than all her strength at home. She sunk down and fell asunder from pure senility and internal disease.

I might draw the same great lesson from the empire of the Saracens, and from various passages in the history of modern Europe. Where there are apparent exceptions, as in the case of the English nation, it would be easy to show that the vigor of youth has been renewed by an infusion of vitality and strength from their young and flourishing colonies. But for these, English enterprise had long ago exhausted itself, and an old age of weakness come on.

I shall regard the point as established then, without further argument, that in nations and communities of men, the period of enterprise is the period of early life.

2. I propose to show, secondly, that another element of importance and promise pertaining to this youthful period, is a strong, inherent, vital energy that operates to throw off the disease of malignant vices, and resist the tendency to internal decay. This is well illustrated by the early annals of Rome. If her own historians have done her justice, no nation ever took its rise from more unpromising material or a lower stage of character. Its foundation upon the banks of the Tiber was laid by a band of barbarians and criminals, and Romulus himself, their leader, was the murderer of his own brother.

And yet such was the pressure of the necessity that was laid upon them, and such was the vitality of that youthful period of their community, that in less than two generations, they acquire a character of more than ordinary rectitude and purity. And there is an emphasis in the phrase, *Roman virtue*, as retained in our own times. Much the same is now said to communities of transported criminals in the vicinity of Botany Bay.

But this department of the subject admits of an illustration from the history of religious communities. The seven churches of Asia were purest and most hopeful in their youth. The church of Ephesus had already fallen from their first love when the apocalyptic message was sent them. And they were assured that their only hopeful period of recovery was an early one. "Quickly,"—such was the language of the spirit. Quickly their candlestick was to be removed, unless they stirred up their youthful energies to the work of repentance and the performance of their first works. Very similar were the warnings that were addressed to the churches of Pergamos and Laodicea. Their only hope was in waking up the vital power that remained, and throwing off the disease that was upon them while they were young. This, all but one of the seven churches, failed to do, and the work of decay with them was rapid and sure. The church of Rome, in the days of its youth, was so exemplary and pure, that Paul told them their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." A maturity of a few centuries, however, rendered it so corrupt that every effort to reform it has proved abortive, and its vices and heresies have become the scourge of the whole world.

The church of the Nestorians when young was pure and evangelic, and enterprising. Her missionaries spread the gospel and its triumphs from Damascus to Pekin, from Ceylon to Siberia.

Her cumbrous organization and machinery were like Saul's armor upon the stripling son of Jesse. But the energy, and zeal, and fire of youth rose superior to every obstacle, and spread the knowledge of the Savior over the continent of Asia. But in her crippled and weary old age, she has not been able to hold fast that which was her own. The emissaries of Rome have stolen away a large share of her strength, and but for the timely aid that has been rendered her by the American churches, there would be reason to fear that the papacy would soon engulf the whole. In her youth, with only the dim light that had come down through eight centuries, with the burden of an unscriptural hierarchy upon her, and without the printed bible to aid and confirm her conquests, she aspired to the conversion of the vast empires of Persia, Tartary, India and China. In the old age which she has now reached, with the printed bible in hand, and learned missionaries to aid her, she is scarcely able to reclaim and save her own wandering sons.

I trust that the point has now been rendered sufficiently clear, that with communities and bodies of men, as well as individuals, the season of promise—the time to lay a desirable foundation for the future—is the period of youth. The providence of God clearly indicates this, and the obvious predominance of enterprise and healthful vital energy in the youthful period, discovers to us the most ample reason why it should be so.

III. The subject as now developed has a three-fold application to us. It addresses us, as citizens of this youthful republic,—as patrons of the youthful religious enterprises of our land,—and as members of this local community.

1. God has given us in this land a goodly heritage, and a youthful one. For thousands of years, he kept back the knowledge of this continent with its large resources, and its wide domain from the civilized nations of the old world, that when its colonization should begin, it might be under the best auspices, and with the largest promise of good for the race of man. And when the time had come for lifting the veil,—the mariner's compass having been discovered, and the art of printing having come into use, and the reformation just ready to flash its broad sheen of light over Europe, still this rocky cradle of liberty was not given to the Spaniards, nor to the French, but reserved another hundred years, until the Puritans could be disciplined amid the storms and fires of persecution, and prepared to begin an empire of freedom for the world. The work assigned them, was not to take an old decrepit nation, and hew away its rottenness, and infuse into it the spirit of life and youth anew—but to begin with the infant, and make it strong, and active, and pure, amid the invigorating influence of New England storms and snows, and under the simple Christianity of the New Testament.

And now that infant has become a strong and enterprising youth, and is stretching out her arms over the continent, and over all the seas, and amazing the world with feats of activity and vigor and strength. And there is hope in our country's youth. She has grievous vices, dark spots—sore and malignant disease upon her, it is true—but there is the healthful vitality of youth to combat and throw off disease, there are large fields for emigration still remaining to renew in years to come, the hardy virtues of the pioneer, and there are our nation's own warm aspirings and fond hopes, and buoyant attitude in the view of the world, with their inherent potency to resist decay. But other nations too have been young, and enjoyed many of these advantages in their youth, and yet have grown prematurely old, in spite of them, and perished. And there is an echo from their decaying monuments; there are a thousand voices from the wrecks of the past; there are the touching memories of our fathers, and our youthful country's call, and the speaking destinies of a legible future—all thundering forth the admonition. Now is the time—for the sons of this youthful republic to be jealous of her virtue and summon every guardian influence to make and keep her pure. Let them labor now, to promote a high intelligence, a pure morality, and above all, a quickening, diffusive religion, a prevalent, actuating fear of God among the masses; let them do all they can to enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, and the religion of the New Testament in their own hearts, in our new settlements, over our emigrant population, and in the high places of trust and power; let them bring the mightiest influences of the unseen world to bear in the ordering of the concerns of this, and to shut out the low vices and dark crimes that blacken our horizon, and then our country's youth shall be pure, and her maturity strong, and glorious, and enduring. But let the season of her youth be lost or perverted, and the early inroads of incurable disease shall give premonition of her doom, and write in the face of all her lofty pretensions, for the world to read,—"that she, too, was born to die."

2. But we have, too, our youthful enterprises in behalf of religion. We have organizations for benevolent action that contemplate the spiritual improvement of our own population and of the world. And these are in their youth, and are acting with the energy and zeal that belong to youth. And it is of unspeakable importance that the supplies from which their life is fed, be rendered constant and full, and their youthful vigor, and activity, and purity, kept up, and on the advance for generations to come. Especially is this true of the churches of our land. The great majority of them are young, and every year is ushering a new multitude of them into being. These are the vital organs of the great national body, that renew the currents of health in its circulation, and put back the progress of disease and decay. How

important that these should ever be young in the ardor of their first love to the Redeemer—watching with sleepless vigilance, lest the warm pulsations of that early love should wax tardy, and its impulsive energy decline! How can the nation be young, and yet its heart and lungs—the vital air-cells and purifiers of its very blood—become rigid and cold with premature old age, or even ossified and dead?

This church, reckoning from the time of its birth is young. And the ardor and fire of youth, I trust, are still kept alive. And there can be no good reason why it should ever be otherwise. The body passes on, by an unavoidable necessity, from youth to age. But not so the spiritual affections of those who have been "born again." Their youth may be perpetually "renewed like the eagle's." It is written for them, for you, my brethren, "they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength, they shall mount up on wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." We may advance in years, but the church shall still be young; time may lay its furrows in our countenances, but the daughter of Zion shall still be fair; disease may lay these bodies in the dust, but the church of Christ still lives on in her sons; aye, lives on in the departed; and is renewed in them with the vigor of an immortal youth. Their life is not extinguished. It is out of our sight—it has ceased to be discernible by sense, but that is because it is "hidden with Christ in God." It is purer, more remote from decay than it could ever be on earth.

Let this church, then, aim to keep up the life of faith, and the buoyant zeal of youth. Let her youthful members renew the life of holy affections from day to day. Let her strong pillars in middle life be as "lively stones, built up into the spiritual house."

Let those who are drawing nearest to the line where the visible fades out into the invisible—but oh! for whom shall such an admonition be framed? How little do we know of the proximity of mortals to that momentous change! We only know that some in the church are near; that the golden link of connection between the church below and the church above is to be kept bright, and the vision of faith quickened to behold it, by the frequent transition of the members of the one to the shining ranks of the others. But for whom it is appointed first to go—who are living nearest to the verge of that blessed world—whether it be the oldest, the youngest, the feeblest, or the strongest, we wait for time to tell. All are near enough, and oh! may all daily strive to catch the spirit of that world, and so be prepared when they reach its margin, to sing,

"By death I shall escape from death,
And youth immortal gain."

3. But I must pass to the application that our subject demands,

to this youthful community. Within the memory of some who are before me this place has had its beginning. You can tell of the time when the material of these dwellings, these stores, these factories, and these churches, was in the forest or in the quarry. The tall trees were waving their tops over your now graded streets—yonder lake was plowed by no keel but that of the Indian's light canoe—your river was wasting its strength in its time-worn channel, and nothing foretold the busy industry to which the long silence of Nature has now given place. But now the hillocks have been leveled down, and the vallies filled, and gardens smile where it seemed an irreclaimable wild; houses, sacred to neatness and order, the scene of cheerful firesides and happy homes, present their modest and graceful proportions along your streets; factories, whose productive industry reaches far abroad, lift their towering stories, and wake the echoes of the valley with their bells and clattering cams; your roads are already adapted to an active commerce; railroads are near you and soon to be of you—you live, even now, almost within hearing of the scream of the whistle; the telegraph reports to you its messages with the same dispatch as in our largest cities; the press throws off its weekly issues among you; the conveniences and the luxuries of an active mercantile traffic are brought to your very door; your river that for thousands of years had flowed idly by, has been taught to work, and like a mighty giant with a hundred hands, has sawed up your forests and is still turning the ponderous wheels that are doing the work of a thousand men. Under the very eye of its early settlers, and while that eye is still taking note, this village has passed from infancy to a vigorous youth, and is spreading its influence far abroad.

It is no longer a question whether this is to be a point of attraction for the enterprising and industrious; whether masses of men are to live and die here; whether their intimate contact shall be mutually improving or corrupting; or whether an influence shall be exerted upon the region around, that shall be potent to bless or to blight. All this is settled. There is to be a compact population here, and there will be the temptations and exposures, and corrupting influences which are always incident to a condensed state of society. There will be, also, peculiar advantages for combating these evils, and attaining a highly improved social state. But the thing which we are chiefly interested to notice now, is that this village is young. Its character is yet in the hands of its inhabitants. The influences that are to be most potent here remain to be determined. And very much will depend upon what is done, while the place is in its youth: upon what is done by the first generation of settlers.

You have made a noble beginning. You have already your temples of worship, and your temples of science. Here is proof that you have not lost sight of the importance of religious influences, nor forgotten that "uneducated mind is educated vice."

But this is only beginning. Shall principles upon which you have thus nobly started, be as nobly carried out? Shall the influences which you have invoked at the beginning receive your hearty support to the end? Shall every thing that opposes them incur your indignant frown? Shall yonder stately edifice, sacred to education and virtue and truth, the ornament of your village, and the proof of forecast and wisdom somewhere, stand to rebuke and forbid the remotest patronage of the school of vice? Shall it be as if this entire hill-side, and some mighty pageant on its top, bore in flaming characters,—No corrupter of youth shall be tolerated here? No license shall be given to any set of men to undo what we, at so great expense of treasure and effort, are laboring to accomplish? Shall the sabbath-bell, and these spires pointing toward heaven, utter a language that is ever to find its deepest echo in the hearts of this people? Shall it be as if a concert of a thousand voices were continually proclaiming, "We will have a weekly sabbath religiously observed: a day of holy rest, and not a day of bacchanalian riot; we will have the Sunday School, and not the school of vice; we will invoke the spirit of God, and not the spirit of all evil; we will drink from the well-spring of truth, and not from the intoxicating bowl; we will maintain the temple of Jehovah, and not the temple of Bacchus; we will give our precious leisure to the improvement of ourselves or others, and not to the society of idlers, or to scenes of dissipation or revelry. We will train the generation to come to intelligence, to industry, to temperance, to reverence for God and the Bible, and the ordinances of religion. We will do all we can to the last, to render truth and virtue the guardian influences of this place, and to protract their guardianship to the remotest generation. All this you may declare now, and give it an emphasis that shall cause it to be believed.

The place is young, and in the language of the text may "gird itself and go whither it will." It may move along the ascending pathway of intelligence and exalted virtue. It may mount to an eminence on which it shall challenge the admiration of all who hear its name. Or it may take the descending grade, and decline downward to infamy. A good name is worth all that it will cost you. And it will cost ceaseless effort and untiring vigilance. You must not be content with the beginning, and cheerfully endure the fatigue of the upward course. An ascent is never accomplished without the cost of toil. A downward career, on the other hand, will cost nothing but remissness and neglect. You need not lend yourselves to the adversary of all good, to do his work. He will find enough that will be ready to do it, if you interpose no resistance. You have but to sleep at your post, and before you dream of it, the good name of your village may be sacrificed. Your own sons may dig the grave of its reputation, and the miserable epitaph shall be "this people began to build, and were not able to finish."

But we look not for this. I hold up the dark side of the picture, that you may abhor and beware. Your beginning is auspicious, and you have not begun too late. The freshness of early youth is yet upon this settlement, and with it, there is doubtless something of the unsophisticated docility of youth. Let it grow and mature. I know you will watch its growth, and control the upward shooting of the youthful trunk; you will nourish it, and rejoice to see it spread, and lift its top toward Heaven; you will remove its excrescenses and study to give it symmetry and strength; you will suffer no Vandal or outlaw to hack or girdle it; you will turn aside the adverse blasts that might bend it too low, and you will prop it round about with the supports of Education, and Virtue, and Religion.

This community is now in its most plastic state; in this state it is put into your hands to mold and form for a bright and enviable future. It will be less plastic bye-and-bye. The material will have taken form, and grown *hard.* Now you may make your impressions as upon the soft wax, or the clay. In years to come, it will have changed to granite or adamant. If you form it right now, it will be hard for the devil or his emissaries to undo your work, then. If the tree sends down its roots deep now, and throws up its branches with a symmetrical growth, and forms for itself a strong and stately trunk, it will be too late to bend or distort it.

Your community is young—your church is young—the nation is young—and you have young hands, and young hearts; and you have but to improve these advantages with a zeal and a wisdom that shall be worthy of them, and there shall be no brighter spot, no more intelligent or virtuous community, no more prosperous people, no more flourishing church than this. It shall be a happy place in which to live, and a favored place in which to die. Religion shall throw her most hallowed influences around it; the voice of prayer shall greet the rising sun and the rising stars; the word of God shall be studied and revered, and loved; the Spirit of God shall dwell in the hearts of His people, and come down upon the entire community like rain upon the mown grass, and, commingled with songs of praise that shall float in the morning air, shall be heard with a blessed frequency, the new song of the soul that has just escaped from the horrible pit of sin to the solid Rock of Hope.

Thus it will be if the friends of virtue, and good order, and religion, are true to the obligations that rest upon them. But let the restraints of virtue be relaxed, and her guardianship thrown off, and the religious education of children neglected, and it is most certain, (not more certain in regard to this place than every other place where similar exposures exist), yet most certain it is that this village would become the bond-slave of mammon, a forum of the dissipated, a stronghold of rowdyism, and a plague spot and source of corruption to the entire region around; a place where the lovers of strong drink shall drain the intoxicating glass; a place where the voice of profane scoffing and blasphemy shall drown every other voice; where infidelity shall hold up the most sacred things of religion to low mockery and contempt; where gamblers and theatrical performers, and the importers of other debasing amusements, shall draw in and corrupt the young, and the great enemy of souls prepare an easy harvest for the second death.

Upon you it rests, in a great measure, beloved hearers, to say to which of these destinies this place shall be given. While you toil for the better destiny, the youthfulness of the place is in your favor, the Sabbath and the truth will work with you and for you, the sympathies and prayers of all the good are with you, and above all, the Lord Jehovah himself, will be with you while you be with him. And the promise, from his own lips to you, is, "they that seek me early, shall find me."

SERMON DCXXXV.

BY REV. SAMUEL SAWYER.

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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S JOY.

> "For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."—1 THESS. ii. 19, 20.

THIS is the language of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to a band of disciples he had gathered into the church. The salvation of men was his great object. Around it were centred all his affections, and to it he gave all his energies. The encouragement of his heart was the prospect of bringing a multitude in the final day saved by his instrumentality. For this he was willing to toil; for this he cheerfully consecrated his life; for this he endured persecution, and even martyrdom. When christian converts walked worthy of their vocation, they were his "hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing."

Let us inquire WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH ENCOURAGE A MINISTER'S HEART; *or, when christians are his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?*

I. A minister's heart is encouraged when *christians manifest that their great and absorbing aim in life is to walk in the fear and love of God.* When christians manifest a steady and uniform piety; when the prevailing disposition is to glorify God; when they all fear to offend, and take pleasure in obeying the precepts of Christ; then the minister's heart is encouraged, and he can go forward cheerfully in his work. He can point to the people of God, and say, "Behold the transforming power of the religion of the cross in the lives of these christians. They are becoming more and more holy; more and more like God in singleness of purpose and excellence of character. They walk by faith, and not by sight. Their conversation is in heaven. *Once* bold transgressors, they lived as though the soul had its everlasting repose in the grave—as though there was no eternity and no world of retribution; *now* they are obedient disciples pressing toward the mark for the prize of their high calling, and looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith." When the minister can thus speak of his people, then, like one of old, he can exultingly exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." For then the Gospel does what it proposes. It fills a darkened soul with light. It changes enmity to love. It displaces sin and imparts holiness. It takes away all grovelling and debasing aims, and substitutes for them the will of God as the grand and governing purpose of life. It makes man like God and earth like heaven. And when christians exhibit the fear and love of Jehovah, then they are the hope and joy and crown of rejoicing to the faithful minister.

II. A minister's heart is encouraged *when christians abound in the spirit of prayer*, SECRET, FAMILY, and SOCIAL. When they thus continue in fervent and effectual supplication, he feels that he is not laboring alone; that others sympathise with him, and would hold up his hands and gladden his heart, by united efforts to promote the interests of Zion, and he girds up the loins of his mind and brightens his armor, and with Immanuel's banner of love waving over him, he leads forward the sacramental host through the varied scenes of tribulation and conflict, by the green pastures and along the still waters of salvation to the Canaan of eternal rest and reward.

III. A minister's heart is encouraged *when his people attend the sanctuary, and sustain the Gospel, and defend his reputation.*

The church of Scotland, for three hundred years, has been the hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing to its ministry, and no church on earth puts a higher estimate on the preached Word, or sustains the Gospel with more efficiency. Men, women, and children, especially the consecrated children of believing parents, throng the temple gates, and as in the time of Christ, the lame, and the halt, and the blind, and the paralytic, and those of long infirmities and diseases, were brought by their friends to him, so the aged, and the infirm, and afflicted, are brought by their friends to the house of God, to be enlightened by the truth and cheered by the promises, and animated by the hopes of a preached Gospel. They thirst for saving knowledge, and desire to be taught the way of life still more perfectly. This reverence for the sanctuary gives dignity and honor to the heralds of the cross, and clothes their message with solemn and superhuman power.

It sometimes happens that a minister of Christ is assailed by sectarian zeal, or by those reproved by his faithful admonitions, or by some fluttering and twittering members of his own church, who hastily condemn that very conduct in respect to which he has most earnestly prayed for the wisdom that cometh from above to direct him; and then his spirit is heavy, and he goes and tells his Savior of the weight upon his heart. He opens the Bible for comfort, and there he reads: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." In these things which are incident to the minister's position, and which come to humble him, and to try his faith, and call out his virtues, how grateful to his heart to find his people ready to hold up his hands, and encourage him in his work of saving the lost, and of building them up in faith. When he gives his toils and prayers, and tears to a people, and their trials are his, and their afflictions and reproaches his, it is one of the most pleasant things in his experience, and one which most deeply affects him, that they show their gratitude and love in return. Then they are his glory, and joy, and crown of rejoicing. With this he can labor on unceasingly in his commission.

IV. A minister is encouraged *when christians have a proper denominational spirit to go forward as one man to do whatever will promote their own prosperity and the glory of God.* A minister may be satisfied in his own mind as to what course will best advance the interests of his church, but unless his people co-operate with him in his plans and efforts, *his* efforts will be to little purpose. They may pursue a course which will hinder a healthy denominational development. But when christians feel that the denomination to which they belong is not guilty of schism in occupying a distinct and separate existence, but is called of God to fortify itself, and lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes, and increase its influence; and when it is willing to co-operate with the minister in all proper methods of church extension, then is he encouraged by their course.

V. A church is the glory and joy of a minister *when its members walk in love towards each other, and towards them that are without.* "How pleasant," exclaimed the Psalmist, "it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." When they are united in faith and have one great object, namely, the glory of God by the enlargement and piety of the church, harmony will prevail. It is most gratifying to the heart of the minister, when christians are thus united and ready to co-operate in every good work. It gives him unaffected joy when brotherly love abounds, when christian charity prevails among the members of his flock. Then his exhortations to follow Christ are not in vain. They will have power, and the spirit which kindly looked upon Peter notwithstanding his denial, and melted him to tears, and which prayed, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do," will become more and more predominant, until showers of divine grace will be poured out to refresh the vineyard of the Lord.

VI. A church is the hope and joy of the minister *when their light shines with converting power.* Christians are called the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They are exhorted to let their light so shine before men, that others seeing their good works, may be led to glorify our Father which is in heaven. When they feel their responsibilities, and try to meet them; when they hunger and thirst for the word of life, and so profit by it as to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in their daily walk and conversation, then the Gospel message falls with new power on the church and the world. When the father and mother so live before their children as to convince them that they prize their coming to Christ more than their introduction into the circles of wealth or fashion or fame, and that the dearest object of their heart is to witness their growing attachment to the things which make for their everlasting peace, and so commend the beauty and excellence of the religion of Jesus to them, by exhibiting its purity and glory in their every day life, as to gather them early into the fold of the Redeemer; when the wife is so exemplary in her deportment towards her husband as to convince him of her sincerity, and of the value of the christian's hope, and to lead him to wish for her enjoyment in reading the Bible, and in prayer, and every religious duty, and at length to seek and find an interest in atoning blood, and join his efforts with hers to train the children committed to their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; when the friend speaks to his friend of the love of God, and the joy of pardon, and the bright prospect of heaven—that world where sin is unknown and death never comes, and friends meet to part no more—and of the society of angels until his eyes moisten, and his heart relents, and his lips breathe forth the prayers of the contrite, and the dead is made alive, and the lost found; when religion thus commends itself in the conduct and life of its professors, then is the minister's heart filled with joy, for he sees his labor is not in vain in the Lord.

VII. A minister is encouraged *when many are converted under his ministry.* When a distinguished servant of Christ, in Virginia, after thirty years of unwearied toil and self-denial, and consistent christian walk, was blessed with a revival of religion which embraced a good part of his own household, his soul was so filled with joy, that he remarked to some of his brethren, that he was amply repaid, and could labor thirty years more if it should please the Master for another such revival." If there is joy over one sinner that repenteth in the presence of the angels, why should not the minister rejoice when he sees many converted under his labors? He may and does rejoice in the goodness of God which permits him to reap so glorious a harvest. His heart swells with holy joy and gratitude. There is no vanity or pride in his bosom, but humility. He thanks God that the weary and heavy laden, as they come to Christ, find rest. He is made humbler and better and more faithful, or should be, under such a blessing. His heart is full. He stands by the cross, and gets near to the throne. He weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that rejoice.

Lastly. Christians will be the hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing to the minister, *when he shall stand with them in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming*, to receive his welcome and reward. Whatever comfort and happiness a christian people can give a minister in this world, the cup of his joy will be full only when he stands with them on the shores of immortality, their trials and sorrows all over, and their redemption complete. To be able to say, "Here, Lord, I am, a sinner saved by grace myself, yet honored in saving others. Here are fathers and mothers, and sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters, and some whole families, saved under my ministry by the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Blessed Saviour, thou didst lay down thy life for me, I have given all but life for these. These are the seals of my ministry which thou hast given; all praise to thee." This will be a happy day to the faithful servant of Christ. Shall it be to us? Shall we be there, as sinners saved by grace? Will you, then, be our glory and joy? You, for whom our years are passing away, our supplications continue to go up, our tears of affection or solicitude fall; you, for whom we study the sacred Word, and preach its tender or alarming truths; first in our waking thoughts and last; will you, then, be our crown of rejoicing? O, christian friends, think often of this approaching day, and live nearer the throne of grace; be more entirely consecrated to God, that all of you may then stand accepted in the Beloved, and be the hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, of all these servants of his who have ministered to you in holy things.

But here are some unreconciled to God. What shall be our relations to them in that searching day? Will you be our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing, our glory? Can you be, if you resist the Gospel, instead of yielding to its power? O that you would give yourselves up to God as others have done, that in the morning of the resurrection you, too, and all of us might be found to the praise of his glorious grace.

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SERMON DCXXXVI.

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INIQUITIES OF THE FATHERS VISITED UPON THE CHILDREN.

"Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation."—EXODUS xx. 5.

THIS is not a judicial sentence, pronounced against all who are so unhappy as to be born of wicked parents. To have a bad father is a misfortune but not a crime. Whatever guilt may rest upon him, his child is innocent. He has not done the deed, nor can he rightly be punished for it. Such a principle is abhorrent to natural justice. It has long since been banished from the criminal code of every civilized nation; and it is indignantly abjured by the Divine Ruler: "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Much less can we believe that the sins of fathers are visited upon their children in another life; that without any guilt of their own, but simply for the offence of an ancestor, who perhaps was dead before they were born, they are condemned to suffer hereafter; and that this relentless curse pursues them through remote worlds and innumerable ages. No: God does not delight thus to perpetuate misery. He does not imprecate evil on the unborn. He does not blast human existence, ere yet it is begun.

And yet the text, joined to one of the Ten Commandments—that perfect and eternal law—plainly declares a principle of unlimited application, and a principle which corresponds with all experience, and is supported by undeniable facts. It is notorious that there are many effects of sin which transcend the period of man's duration upon the earth; and which are the bitter inheritance of his children. But between this fact and the broad rule of equity, that each shall answer, only for himself, there is no contradiction, if we regard this—not as a sentence to death, delivering up the wretched offspring of the wicked at once to the horrors of endless retribution—but simply as declaring the natural operation of evil descending on a man's posterity. Children are not strictly *punished* for their father's sins; that is, held as morally guilty, and liable to the full and utter extremity of the law; and yet they do suffer for their sins in every fibre of their frame. This is not a special act of God—a secret decree which the Bible reveals—but a general law of nature—universal as the laws of birth and death. It is a part of the more general law of descent—that a human being shall be born from other human beings, and come into existence with its destiny joined to an antecedent life. It is this law, by which evil is entailed upon children, that I wish to illustrate from common experience.

The influence of the father in determining the character and fate of his child, lies in three things: 1. In stamping his nature upon it at birth; 2. In presenting to its little mind the first example, and the one to which it looks up as the model of manliness, and which it copies from an instinct of imitation; and 3. In the principles instilled by education.

Foremost among the influences which predetermine the destiny of men, is the influence of race. Compare the African and the European. Both are human beings; yet how unlike! Born under different skies—differing in color and in mode of life—they seem like two distinct species. How difficult to change one into the other. Take a Hottentot, and place him under the most favorable circumstances, and it will require many generations before he can be brought up to the level of civilized men. The curse of his race is on him. He bears on his forehead the mark of centuries of debasement. For ages all intellect has been extinguished, and moral sensibility obliterated; while the passions of savage life, its ferocity and brutality, have acquired a prodigious development. Long must it be before this African lion can be tamed. So the Indian, though half civilized, retains the instinct of his former life. He is still a savage. And though he may live in a village, and follow agriculture, the cry of the hunter echoing through the forest, will often make him rush to the wilderness again. This original influence of race is perhaps the strongest which determines human character. It lasts for hundreds and thousands of years. In all the descendants of Ishmael to this day is traced the wild, untamed spirit of their ancestor. Bring an Arab into your cities, and make him a slave. He may submit to the yoke. Yet he lives as in a dream. But let him hear the neighing of a war-horse, and his eye is wild. The erect, excited air betrays the child of the desert.

But, to come nearer home, we see the same law running through every family, and giving to each member certain domestic features. We remark first, the transmission of external peculiarities—this is the most familiar of all facts—that members of the same family resemble each other. Brothers and sisters are recognized by their family likeness. You observe it in the complexion, the eyes, and the general cast of countenance. Any departure from this rule—a marked dissimilarity—strikes us with surprise as an exception to a general law. Thus the father stamps his image on his child. He gives him, not only existence and a name, but his own form and face. Even the physical constitution is hereditary. It is strong or weak according to the progenitor. The sons of Anak are a race of giants, while a puny father leaves a brood of sickly and short-lived children. This close bond becomes fearfully apparent in the transmission of disease. If the father's blood has been polluted by some taint, that poison is perpetuated through generations. In countries where the leprosy prevails, that appalling malady can seldom be eradicated from the race—*never* from the individual constitution. Sometimes it may pass over one generation, but only to light upon the second or the third. Thus *it* lives, while its victims die.

The same law applies to the mind as to the body. Always it bears a parental stamp. Peculiar tastes and aptitudes pass from father to son. Here is a family of mathematicians. Here another distinguished for musical genius. Moral qualities are too subtle to be capable of as exact classification as external features. Yet a nice observation will disclose the same identity. Father and son have the same temperament; active or dull; warm or cold; impulsive, or cautious and calculating. You may see a whole family distinguished by the same sanguine temper, marked by their light hair and sparkling eyes; while in the next house, all sit apart, moody and silent, hardly being roused into an animated conversation, from one generation to another. If this observation were pursued, it would reveal much to startle and surprise an unthinking parent. He would find his child's nature a close copy of his own. Every child has the stamp of its origin. A mixture of two natures—it derives certain qualities from each. Father and mother are here blended in one. *Their* characters may change by time. But such as they were at first—such as nature made them—such their child will be. And often in later years—looking into that child's eye, as into a bright mirror, shall they see themselves reflected—the good and the bad strangely blended together. If in the mother's heart there was a vein of poetical or religious sensibility, some trace of that fine, spiritual nature will discover itself in those to whom she gives life. On the other hand a coarse and vulgar father will transmit the foulness of his mind. That polluted stream will flow down, and trouble the clear waters of youth. Or if either parent be possessed of an inordinate vanity—that conceit may be repressed in them, but it will come out in their children. They may restrain it from fear of ridicule, or from regard to the manners of society, but no such invisible law checks the unconscious boy or girl. Children know not how to conceal pride under an affected modesty. They have not yet learned to disguise nature. And in their unguarded words and actions the parent is betrayed. Hence often the most infallible way to judge of the father and mother is to look at the children. Nay—if parents were wise, they would watch these little beings, and there see themselves revealed. Men and women of the world live each an artificial life, and so constantly affect what they do not feel, that they do not suspect the vanity and selfishness which may lurk in their hearts, until they discover these traits in their children. With the same uniformity do religious tendencies discover themselves. I deny not that all who are born into the world are depraved. But there are degrees of natural depravity as wide apart as the degrees of acquired depravity. Some children are born with a strong religious instinct—not yet indeed confirmed into a pious character, but with a natural veneration for God, and a conscientious regard to duty, that are the basis of all worship and of holiness of life. Hence there are families which have been distinguished through generations for eminent piety. Such are many of those descended from the Pilgrim Fathers. Others are equally noted for hereditary infidelity. Their children seem incapable of religion. They are born skeptics and heathens. Hence the character of the father involves that of the child; and as the character fixes the destiny, his fate decides theirs. Other causes may come in to modify the original stamp, yet the inherent force of nature derived from the parents, strengthened by their ever present examples, do more than all other influences together to determine the child's future history.

When now it is considered that the greater number of all on the earth, who sustain the holy relation of parents, are ignorant and vicious, the moral state in which their offspring are introduced to life, becomes appalling. They come into being with these evil instincts strong in their little breasts—an inward force to be developed with every hour's growth, and to be fortified by years of mischievous activity.

This fact, with the terrible certainty which it involves of future evil, makes us turn away heart-sick from the sight of children. Childhood, innocent and pure, is the most beautiful sight on earth. There is something in the laugh of a child—so free, so joyous, so unconscious of sorrow and guilt, that it thrills us like the carol of a bird. And for a moment it seems as if we were still in a world of innocence. But we observe more closely, and our thoughts take a sadder turn. If we watch the sports of children unseen, or overhear their conversation, we are shocked by words of vulgarity, perhaps even of profaneness. Low thoughts have crept into their minds. Their souls are already polluted.

Look at a group of children playing in the street. At a distance they all seem beautiful; their countenances are fresh and ruddy, and they are full of life and happiness. But draw nearer. Here is a boy, in whose coarse features is the brand of vulgarity; another face is marked with stupid ignorance, united with a premature development of brutal passions; other countenances betoken a more gentle nature, but at the same time one that is weak, and that will be governed by fiercer spirits around it. Or, to take an extreme case, go into the low quarters of a great city, and see the children that emerge from those miserable tenements—swarming out of garrets and cellars. Children I call them, for they have seen but few years; but they are already haggard like men, and discover every trait that marks debased and degraded human nature. Many are born to be thieves. You see it in their cunning looks, and that sly watch which they keep of every passer in the street. On the forehead of others is written, as plainly as the brand on the brow of Cain—violence and murder. Here, too, are girls—beings that bear the sacred name of woman—yet that are born to vice and damnation. All these children are ruined before the age of ten years. As the victims of the Auto-de-Fe had flames painted on their garments to denote the punishment to which they were doomed, so the fires of the pit are already curling around these young wretches, and casting a lurid glare in their faces. What a responsibility rests on those wretched men and women who have called into existence these helpless creatures to be the heirs of their guilt and woe. Why did they not leave them to sleep forever unawaked? Why drag them forth only to hear their cries, and to leave them the bitter inheritance of vice and crime and infamy? From such foul births springs nothing good. This evil parentage is like the hideous form of sin described by Milton, which brought forth only the monster Death.

But think not that these dens of shame are the only places where human souls are destroyed, or that the children of the poor are the only ones on whom the iniquity of the father is visited. Many children of the rich are born under a baleful influence, as if some malignant star had cast its shadow on their birth. Nature is an impartial mother. She shows no favor to one class. The passions of our nature are as strong in the rich as in the poor, and the seeds of evil spring up as rankly amid wealth and luxury as amid poverty and vice. For example, violence of temper is as common in the one class as the other, and in both alike it produces the same desolating effects. It has a twofold action: first crushing and terrifying, and then provoking resistance and rebellion. There is no limit to the power of an angry man. When he bursts into his dwelling in a storm, all flee from him, or sit silent and trembling. Oh! if there were any better feeling in his heart, how must he be rebuked by these tokens of his tremendous power! But there he sits, black as a thunder cloud. Every voice of joy is hushed. At length the child catches the influence of that gloomy presence, and becomes soured and morose. A stern father makes a shy and sullen child. A shadow gathers on that young brow which years may not banish. Even though in later life happiness returns, that scar remains, sad trace of an unhappy childhood. This is the terrible mark which a father's violence leaves upon the disposition of his child. The effect of this overbearing temper will be either to break the child's spirit and crush it forever, or to force it at last into some act of resistance. Often does the violent man drive his son from his door, or compel him to flee in self-defence. Such is the curse of unbounded rage. Arbitrary and self-willed, his imperious temper brooks not remonstrance or advice, until his sons leave their father's house, choosing to rove as vagabonds rather than bear his household tyranny. And the daughters throw themselves away on the first chance of happiness. Thus one after another his children are sent forth into the world, wretched outcasts, until the old man stands solitary by his desolated hearthstone; his dwelling is in ruins; all are gone, dead, or unhappy. A gray haired man alone remains. But the evil ends not here. Those children, thus cast on the world, have to begin life, not with minds well regulated, but with a temper soured and unhappy, and exasperated to evil. A violent father gives them his wilful nature. Fierce and revengeful passions live long. They pass from sire to son, and 'hereby family feuds are kept up for generations. Thus a vindictive old man leaves a son passionate and revengeful. And so beginning, he bids fair to end his life by crime. That sad inheritance—an ungoverned mind—seldom fails, sooner or later, to plunge soul and body into hell. Besides these passions, which are common to all classes of men, there are temptations peculiar to the rich. Their wealth is a great danger, for it generates pride, and a craving for self indulgence, and an unbounded love of this world.

Follow the line of descent:—Take the one trait of Avarice. Men of fortune, especially if they have made their wealth, are very apt to love money. Their sons inherit this trait. It is a passion which runs in the blood. If in due time it be tempered by wisdom, and ennobled by generosity, it will do no harm. But if he who has gained riches be a man of narrow mind and selfish heart, whose tight hand no sunshine of prosperity can relax, then will he become a greedy miser, and so will his sons be after him. They will inherit his innate avarice; and this will be confirmed by the example ever before their eyes, of grinding extortion, and by many a shrewd maxim of worldly interest. Thus they will grow up for that greed for gain, which is one of the most inveterate passions of our nature, and which will exterminate from the breast pity and humanity, and which will drive a man to fraud, to ingratitude, and to cruelty. But for all that the man gains his object. Does he not hoard up riches year after year? Many will applaud him as a shrewd and wise man. But follow him through life to desolate and dreary age. Then, when his mind ought to be at rest and at peace, when he needs affection and gratitude from those who remember his kindness, then behold this selfish being, shrivelled up into a grey and grizzled miser, who sits grinning and chattering over his heaps of gold! And is this an end worth a sacrifice of the best years of life. Follow him into eternity, and see him, "lifting up his eyes in hell, being in torments," and then say if the hard heart and cruelty of that man's father have not been terribly punished in this murder of his son!

There is another consequence which the child of a hard man has to bear—the odium of his father's name. When he first becomes a man, and goes forth among men, he beholds something in the regards turned upon him which he cannot explain—a look of anger and aversion, coupled with muttered words. Why this fierce look from a stranger? It is the memory of his father, which is recalled at the mention of his name, and which awakens bitter and revengeful thoughts. Oh, avaricious and cruel man. You may force your way through the world, regardless of universal hatred; you may be strong enough to bear it, but it will not fall on you alone. When you are dead and gone, your innocent child, just coming on the stage of action, will be met by it. Men will turn from him, and curse him, as in their hearts they now curse you. So often does a father's pride prejudice the fortune, and impair the happiness of his child. A great man may be proud of his superiority; but to his son he may transmit his pride without his intellect, and thus that very extravagant self-estimation becomes a constant source of mortification through life.

But the great danger of wealth, to children, is that it nurtures the love of pleasure and self-indulgence. Wealth brings luxury, and, with it, a habit of indulging every caprice, which enervates the mind and unfits it for high thought and heroic action. If this tendency be not discerned by a watchful parent, and resisted by a vigorous discipline, the youth grows effeminate, and intensely selfish, until at last he considers his pleasure more than the bodies and souls of men. Thereby the moral tone of the mind is lowered. That strong, robust life, which we expect in a young man, gives place to an unhealthy craving for pleasure and excitement. Even on the best disposition we see the effect of such a condition. No man can stand long the effect of luxury and idleness. It is a hot-house atmosphere, in which all noble sentiments are extinguished, and the passions fearfully inflamed. Thus temptations multiply, while the power to resist them is gone. To be born in such affluence is a great misfortune. A young man may be saved by sudden poverty; by a loss of fortune which shall at once cast him out of the lap of luxury, and compel him to struggle. But leave him to languish in indolence, with unlimited wealth at command, and no object but to gratify his passions, and his ruin is certain. Who but can foresee the melancholy wreck which he will soon become? There is not one chance in a thousand for such a man to be saved. Think of this, ye who boast to have provided well for your sons, because you leave them ample fortunes. That may be a good or an evil according to their characters. But perhaps you leave them another heritage—bad blood; passions gross or violent; feeble intellect and feebler conscience. Thus is the high-born youth endowed; with such faculties he begins his perilous way. May God in mercy permit you to go down to the grave before you see the end!

This danger is aggravated by a weak example and a false education. Pardon me, my brethren, if I seem bold. The minister of Christ must not flatter. I will not suppress my conviction, that the course of education pursued in many rich houses is totally wrong, and can produce only unhappiness. What are the principles given to resist these passions? Rules of Society! Laws of Honor! A son is taught to be a gentleman before he is taught to be a man and a christian! Miserable folly! Without religious principle, what is all this worth? Will education keep a young man from vice? Did a flimsy sentiment of honor ever restrain one from being a profligate? Answer, ye hundreds of debauched and drunken sons from our highest families. This is the radical vice of our fashionable education. It is an attempt to prepare the young for life *without religion*. Parents think it the great thing to give their children "a fine education;" to cultivate the mind and polish the manners, and prepare them to make a brilliant display. Religion, as the great end of human existence, enters not into their calculations. God is not in all their thoughts. Wretched mistake! What is all this polish of the outward man good for, when there is no exaltation of the soul? What is intellect without principle? What are manners without heart? They only encourage selfishness by veiling it with grace. Sons, thus educated, will be the curse of your old age. If you leave them to grow up without reverence for God, they will show little respect for your white hairs. Your ingratitude shall breed ingratitude in them, and make you feel, when too late, how—

> "Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
> To have a thankless child."

If their moral principles are not anchored first to the throne of God, you have no security that they will not be carried away by the first strong temptation. Therefore do I solemnly accuse many fathers of utterly failing in duty to their children. They leave them to grow up with no religious faith or principle whatever. The first word of man's relations to his Creator, or of life beyond the tomb, is never heard under their roof. Sons are left to catch the vague notions of ignorance and prejudice; and fathers will hear their flippant and conceited opinions without rebuke. Perhaps by ridicule of sacred things they sap the principles of all religion in their minds. And is such a father doing his duty? Is this kindness? Is this affection? Is this a preparation for all the snares that a son will meet in going through the world?

I have spoken of the temptations of sons. But by the household hearth there stands a gentler being, whose destiny, too, is involved in the parental character and training, and who may reap the bitterest woes, not only from parental wickedness, but from parental ignorance and folly. Take a common case—that of a young, bright, beautiful girl—the object of tenderest solicitude. Every thing which wealth can do for her is done; she has the best teachers; every grace is added to her person, and every accomplishment to her mind. But for what is all this to prepare her? For a more useful life? No; but to make a dazzling figure in society. All her dreams of life terminate in one thought—pleasure—her own personal enjoyment. She studies music, not as a means of fine spiritual culture; not to refresh her after severer duties; but only to make her an object of admiration. This is the whole aim of existence—to gratify her vanity. And no faithful friend ever cautions her against placing in this all her happiness. Father and mother never speak to her of *duty;* of her obligations to her Creator and to society; but by the fond looks with which they gaze upon her, and the flattery they pour into her ear, they stimulate her vanity to the highest pitch. What a foundation for happiness! What a preparation to live, and—for even such flowers must fade—to die! Behold this young being, as, thus adorned, she steps upon the threshold of life. See her, when first introduced into the world of fashion in which she is to move. She enters a drawing room, brilliant with lamps and mirrors, which reflect on every side her fairy form, and, for an instant, is the centre of all eyes. This is the happy moment of which she has dreamed for years. Now her life is begun. At length she is embarked on that full stream of pleasure, which is to float her on forever! Unhappy young woman! She has commenced a life which will inevitably end in disappointment and sorrow. What bitter tears will she shed! And though that radiant form now appears the youthful green of beauty and felicity, to the eye of hoary experience, which has seen many such bright but brief careers, she seems far more like one of those fair youths, whom the ancient Mexicans decked with garlands for the sacrifice. She cannot be happy. Wretched father! what are you doing with that beautiful child? Is she to tread on air that you educate her thus—only to lead a life of pleasure, with no right idea of the world she is to enter, with no sense of religious duty, and no principles to resist temptation? Oh! could you look forward ten years! What a spectacle might you behold. That idolized daughter—withered, to bloom no more; her affections wasted; her heart broken; and slowly sinking into the arms of death—death of which you have kept her ignorant, or which you have led her to believe, could not come to her. Beholding such a wreck, I ask, Who is responsible for all that disappointment and anguish? Is it not the pride and folly of the father, which are thus terribly visited upon his child? Yet such are the influences which hundreds of fathers and mothers throw around their children. Unconsciously they act the part of tempters and deceivers. They entice their children to destruction by a gay and glittering path. May God forgive them, for they know not what they do!

It is nothing to reply, as many a father does, when he sees a son or daughter going to ruin: I meant no harm! Alas! it is not what you mean, but what you do. Your children must suffer for your mistakes as well as your crimes. Your errors of judgment—your false education—must leave its ruinous effect upon them. And no confession of guilt could be more melancholy than the words which so often break from a dying old man, who has seen his children destroyed—I have made a great mistake! Think not that I charge any who hear me with a want of affection to their children. I know how fondly you bend over those little beings. You wish to educate them well. You do not mean to instil false principles into their minds. And yet by some fatal mistake—even by over fondness—you may as effectually injure all their prospects for happiness in this world and another, as if you were their bitterest enemy. Mere inefficiency is often as potent for evil as harsh brutality. You do not mean to be cruel. You do not premeditate crime. But alas! in this world, where the tendency of things, left to themselves, is to go wrong, more sin is committed, and more misery to body and soul is caused by *indolence* than by *malice*. You are not hard-hearted. But it is your indifference, or neglect, or your astonishing blindness, which may do all this evil. If you now perceive your error, and would remedy it—away with that stupid folly that it is enough to educate the mind and polish the manners. Begin to educate the heart and the soul. Give your children fixed religious principles. Bring them up in the love and fear of Almighty God.

The design of this long argument is plain. It is to open the eyes of parents to the dangers which surround their families; to lead them to the brink of the precipice, from which they may look down the abyss into which their children may be plunged. This law of hereditary evil places every father in a position of responsibility truly awful. He is the master of an absolute authority, a dread arbiter of woe. Among the ancient Romans a father had the right of life and death over his child. Our laws have taken away that fearful power. But still the ability remains—for it exists in nature—to poison a child's blood, and fire his brain, and destroy his happiness. How wretched then is the office of a wicked man on the earth—born only to curse everybody with whom he comes in connection. Wherever his kindred extend, his influence carries a poison with it. Even when his family is allied with others, and thus the descent is divided, still in those most remote there is the trace of that tainted blood. It may be mingled with other currents, with gentler races, still in the far descendants will break out the irrepressible passion of their ancestor. He therefore who entails a malignant nature on all to whom he gives life, perpetuates the evil of his own depraved mind to hundreds that are unborn. He accumulates guilt upon himself even after he is dead. He who thus hath wronged his race, is doubly damned—for his own wickedness, and for his ruin of others. Better that he had never been born! or better that he had died young, even though he perished! Bad men think it hard to be punished in eternity. But, ah! that is the least misfortune. If he alone, who has done this evil, could be dead and forgotten—aye, if the blackness of darkness could close over him for ever, and no other effect issue from his guilty life—then, dreadful as it would be, we could consent to the sacrifice. But, no; he drags others down with him. His offspring, innocent of his crimes, must yet suffer for them. He blasts their happiness. He prevents their salvation. Thus from one bad man a long succession of misery flows down the ages.

If spirits from another world ever come back to this, with what remorse must a wicked man trace the effect of his life in successive generations of his descendants—an effect which he has now no power to prevent. He will see to what degradation a once honored name may be reduced. His own dear children—so like their father now—may yet drag his image through dens of infamy and shame. At the distance of a hundred years one of his line may bear his proud name to the scaffold. And as these spirits pass from life, and enter the world of retribution, he may hear afar off in the distance many a well-remembered voice—the echo of his own! Are there any here whose course of life threatens this disastrous termination? I bid them stop and look before them. It is not too late to stay the work of ruin—for I speak to living men. The grave has not yet closed over you, and shut out all hope of remedy. You may avert this terrible calamity which is about to overwhelm your house. Awake, then, to the dark current of evil that flows from one wicked man. See what you are doing. Stop these baleful influences. Smother the tremendous passions which rage and boil within your breast. Hold back that stream of fire, which, if once it break forth, will desolate your home, and blast and blacken the hopes of generations to come. I plead for the unborn. They are yet in the future, and can offer no prayer. They cannot deprecate the curse—if curse it be—of being among your descendants. Yet they are all living in the eye of God, and their existence and their woes will soon become a fearful reality. I plead, then, for your own children—for those that half a century hence shall stand up on the earth—in your likeness, having your blood in their veins, and who may suffer all their wretched lives from the vicious nature which you have transmitted to them.

If it seem hard that future generations should suffer for the sins of the present, remember that with this law of hereditary evil is connected a law of hereditary good. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: *and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*" Thus by its operation all the righteous families of the earth are blessed. If it be a mournful position to stand at the head of a family noted only for wickedness, how honorable and glorious is it to be the progenitor of a pious race—a race of upright, Christian men. It was the chief ambition of Walter Scott to be the founder of a family—the first of a long and noble line. Alas! he has been dead but twenty years, and already his name is extinct. But what was denied to the man of genius, is often granted to a poor man, eminent only for his piety. In our country churches lives many a patriarch, whose crown of glory is his children. How simple is that character, and yet how august! In his family he is a king and a priest; poor, it may be, and struggling hard for subsistence, he can give his children little. But he gives them religion; and that is enough. He who imparts to his sons good religious principle; who gives them a firm faith in that divine government which is established over the world, and which sooner or later will reward virtue and punish guilt; and who leaves a pious example to those that shall come after, has made the best provision for their happiness. Who can measure the influence of such an ancestor? How it rolls down for ages, like the blessing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on all the tribes of Israel.

It is said that in the ocean there is a mighty under-current, setting from the equator to the poles, and carrying the heat of the tropics to colder regions. This immense body of water, keeping its submarine channels, flows under the whole broad Atlantic, and under vast continents of floating ice, and at length comes to the surface at the north pole, and there giving out its heat, creates that open Polar Sea, which is the wonder of navigators. In this is there not something like that influence of deep piety and strong character which a good man exerts ? an influence which shuns notice ; which retreats from observation ; which sinks, as it were, to the bottom of the ocean, but which there, mingling with the great undercurrents of society, flows slowly on into other latitudes, carrying its blessed, vital warmth into the frigid zone, there to impart a milder temperature to the wind blowing over the deep, and sending a softer air to the neighboring shores, thus soothing the most rugged and inhospitable climates of the earth. Of such an ancestry any man may be proud. There is a vulgar pride of birth which looks only to the rank or fortune of a forefather. This is to be despised. The only thing which may cause a glow of just pride is to know that we are descended from honest and heroic men ; patriots and christians ; men who feared God and served their generation. Such were the fathers from whom is derived our best American blood. Happy is he who can look back to such sires ; who can say with Cowper :—

> "My boast is not that I derive my birth
> From loins enthroned, or rulers of the earth ;
> But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
> The heir of parents passed into the skies."

Some of these patriarchs linger still. I see them walking our village streets. How serene is their old age ; how steady their step as they go down into the dark valley. Their eye is bright, and on their foreheads is reflected the light of that resplendent city of God which they are approaching.

If therefore any here tremble at the power which God has put into their hands, let them consider how that immense authority may be used for good as well as for evil. You, who are a father, stand to your child in the place of God. You are in one sense the author of his being, and the source of an infallible authority. To you he looks up at first as to a being who cannot lie, and who cannot err. Soon, alas ! this childish error will be dissipated. But strive for a few years to prolong your influence by the wisdom and mildness of your control. For his sake repress your violent impulses, and endeavor to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world." By whatever care you govern yourself, by so much do you insure his virtue and safety. When you are dead, your example will be still powerful ; and then shall he receive the reward of your goodness to others. Men shall look on him with affection, because he is your child ; your name will awaken sweet memories in the hearts of the living, and they will be kind to the poor orphan for his father's sake, then sleeping in the grave.

But I have not done with this subject until I add one word to another class. I have spoken to fathers. I now speak to sons; and not to the sons of the good, but of the bad. Are they given up by the operation of this law to hopeless ruin? Have they no part nor lot in the determination of their destiny? We can imagine one of those children of vice, of whom I have spoken, thus to mourn his unhappy fate: I am one of the lost ones of the earth—accursed in every circumstance of my being—accursed in my parents—accursed in that impetuous nature which they have given me—accursed in my condition—surrounded with a thousand temptations to crime. No ray of gladness shone upon my birth. No father ever taught me the way to God. No mother ever prayed for my salvation. No kiss of affection ever won my child's heart. Alone, unfriended, I have wandered on from youth to manhood. And now what is to become of me? I see no resource of honest industry—nothing, but to keep on as I am—the companion of desperate men, and to share their wretched doom. With a look of unutterable despair, he cries, I am in the toils of hell, and I shall not escape.

Is there then absolutely no hope for the children of depraved parents? Is this law a sentence to destruction? Oh no: there are no human beings thus foredoomed of God—bound in the chains of inexorable fate, and consigned to misery hopeless and eternal. This is not a bill of attainder, executed upon all the generations of the wicked—executed before they are born, and cutting them off from the common privileges of humanity. There is salvation even for the lowest and vilest of mankind. God's grace can purify pollution, and reform the criminal, and rescue those who seemed irretrievably lost. For such, then, there is hope. Only that hope is very small. They have a hundred fold more difficulties to encounter than others. Their salvation is possible only by the most heroic efforts to break away from the evil associations of their family, and to separate from every form of temptation. What a position for a son, to be obliged for his salvation to fight against a father's example, and against those terrible passions which he feels burning in his blood. Nature is mighty, even in reformed men. He will feel the powerful impulses of evil returning upon him like paroxysms of madness. There will be times when he will cry out, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But let him pray, like Jonah, even from "the belly of hell," when he was "cast into the deep, and went down to the bottom of the mountains, and the earth with her bars was about him forever," and God can bring him up from the gates of death. Is there in this house one who is conscious that the circumstances of his early life were all adverse to piety and to happiness? Reproach not your parents as the authors of your misery. Tread lightly over their dust. They were unhappy enough themselves, and they have left you but what they experienced. They at least have given you existence; and if you use it well, it will prove a blessing beyond all price. Receive it, then, from the hand of God. And against all obstacles live a good life. There is an Eye above, by which your struggles will not pass unobserved. And though your earthly father be not worthy of the name, there is a Father in heaven, who will pity you as a friendless orphan, and adopt you into His holy and happy family.

SERMON DCXXXVII.

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HOW SHALL THE MINISTRY BE USED TO THE BEST ADVANTAGE.

"But what are they among so many?"—JOHN vi. 9.

It cannot be regarded as a merely fortuitous circumstance, that the miracles of our Lord are so well adapted to convey moral or spiritual instruction. That this is a characteristic of them, every thoughtful reader will readily perceive. And the theory that the physical was designed for the moral; that the material thing which furnishes the figure was purposely made for the thing signified, and not merely taken up and adopted as by a sort of after-thought, certainly has much in its favor. God, who has "made every thing beautiful in his place," seems to have set those things one over against the other; and so to have constructed things sensible, that they shall subserve the higher purposes of his moral government, by being vehicles of moral truth. He has placed around us a thousand monitors, so that wherever we tread we might see the tokens of his presence, and reminders of that spiritual kingdom, which though invisible, is most real; so that we might hear voices speaking of Him, and of the way of holiness, and to the "purged ear," there might come even out of the dead things of the material world, and out of the discords of earthly living, continually the music of a higher life; so that, "sun and moon, and stars of light, fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling his word, mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, creeping things and flying fowl," while praising Him, should be appealing to us, and bidding "kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges of the earth, both young men and maidens, old men and children," also to praise the Lord, and to behold his glory and serve Him. And that He has done this, that He has so made the world, enhances our adoring estimate of his excellence, and of the supremacy of holiness.

Were I designing to discuss this point at large, the miracle before us would afford fit illustration of it. While leading us to reflect on our dependence on the Divine Being for "life and breath and all things," it would also remind us of the unwasting and unlimited sufficiency of the provision of almighty grace for the redemption of lost men. The bread of life which is to save the soul, can feed only those who receive it from the Saviour's hands; but in his omnipotent hands it may feed all the hungry millions that will crowd to receive it, and still it will be ample for the supply of other millions. The Lord who has it to bestow, is not willing to send away unsupplied, any who will take it at his hand. But this is not the main object which I now propose to myself; and these remarks are offered simply to justify the appropriation which I purpose to make of the text to a specific subject. You probably anticipate this appropriation, and will readily perceive that I apply the words to *the Christian Ministry*. Compared with the wants of the world, the ministers of the Gospel are *few among the many*. I regret that it has not been in my power to procure such statistics as would enable me to present the exact number of evangelical ministers, with the populations of the several fields of labor which they occupy. But it is a fact familiar and undisputed, that ministers are comparatively few in number; so that the language of the text is justly applicable to them, *What are they among so many?* And it is an inquiry of grave importance, how shall the wants of the world be met? How shall the ranks of the ministry be filled? And constantly are we called upon to pray the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into his harvest. That, however, all important as it is, is not the theme now before us. The scope of the narrative more naturally leads us to another inquiry, not so often propounded, and yet worthy of careful consideration. It is, *How shall we make the most of the ministry we have?* How shall we turn them to the best account? How shall we make them go as far as possible? That was the matter that came practically before the mind of Christ in response to the inquiry of the disciples. The problem was to make the five barley loaves and two small fishes supply the wants of the great multitude. He at once solved it in the only way in which it could be solved—by a miracle. Now the point before us is, *How can the ministry, as it now is, be made most available in meeting the wants of the world?* Of course we do not look for any *miracle* to be performed; and yet obviously without a miracle, the ministers now holding commission cannot at once accomplish the work of preaching the Gospel to the whole world. The single fact, that of one thousand millions, the population of the globe, only two hundred and seventy-five millions are nominally christianized, and that of them only eighty-five millions are Protestant, is enough to press upon us the solemn consideration that with the present evangelical ministerial force, nothing short of a miracle can accomplish the speedy conversion of the world. And therefore we can never cease our calls on the young men of the church to give themselves, and on parents, to give their children to the Lord; our efforts, not only to keep up a regular supply of the ministry, but also to summon more and more to this work of the Lord. But how can these few do most among the many? This is our theme. *How shall the ministry be used to the best advantage?* Before coming directly to the discussion, let me make two or three preliminary remarks.

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In all that is to be said on this subject, our absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit, is kept constantly in view. No ministry, however able, faithful, and numerous, can be successful, unless He give the increase. But this dependence, while absolute, must be intelligent. It is the dependence of one working in the line of duty, and looking for no miracle to supply his lack of service.

Again. While we are not to look for a miracle to be performed to secure the proposed end, so *neither is any thing miraculous expected of us.* Nothing is required of us beyond the bounds of human ability. We find it no where written that we must be ubiquitous. Nor is the work of the world's evangelization any where prescribed to us as the work of a day, or a year, or a generation. Ministers are men; the world is large. We are to be continually working, praying, hoping, *waiting;* we are to *walk by faith*, and to work the work of Him that sent us, while it is day.

Further. Whosoever attempts to comprehend this subject, will find himself met at the outset, by certain difficulties arising out of the present organization and state of the church, the removal of which would greatly enhance the strength of the ministry. There is, for instance, *sectarianism*, not only interfering with cordial co-operation, and tending to limit the reach of individual usefulness—an evil which might possibly be counterpoised by the benefits of concentration—but also producing a rivalry that not seldom partakes of unholy competition, a spirit quite unfavorable to the spread of godliness. But more than this, *it divides the strength of the ministry and of the churches.* By the multiplication of agencies and machinery, it expends the resources of the church unwisely. It causes several ministers to be occupied on ground for which one would be all-sufficient. Several small churches are often found existing in a village, whose wants might be amply met by one organization, and one house of worship, and one minister. This is an evil not easily remedied. Denominational feeling, which is right under proper guards, and controlled by christian charity, is apt to become very strong, and to verge towards sectarianism. Differences of sentiment will exist, and preferences may be indulged; still, it is a question, whether the cultivation of charity and the exercise of self-denial, might not do much to prevent the evil; to bring together in one assembly those who are divided into two or three, and thus allow the ministers unnecessarily employed, to devote their labors to some other sphere. We may say what we will about the impossibility of persons of different sentiments uniting in one communion for the service of God. Here is an evil: can it not be remedied? No matter now how we feel, the question is, how *ought* we to *feel*, and *to act*?

And the evil, while it is more apparent, becomes also more tangible and more controllable, when you come to those denominations between which there is very little difference as to doctrine, or government, or form of worship. We all know many cases in which one minister could do the work now done by two or three. And is it right when the wants of the church and of the world are so numerous and pressing—is it right thus to waste ministerial strength? Is it not evident that one thing that we greatly need to make the ministry go farther towards feeding the hungry millions, is a larger effusion of the almost miraculous power of *christian love?* Kindred to this, is the mistake sometimes made of *multiplying feeble churches* of any one denomination, when a little self-denial on the part of the people would give them church accommodations in already established organizations. Of course I shall not be misunderstood as opposing a judicious church extension. No one will more readily advocate the organization of new churches in suitable localities, when either the pressing demands of the present, or the clear judgment of forecasting prudence, call for them. But we have seen churches commenced, and struggling, and *dying*, because injudiciously begun. The mere organization of a church, and building of a house of worship, is not always an indication of an accession of strength. Ministerial energy and ability may be thus injudiciously expended. Numbers may thus be concentrated at a given point, not working to the best advantage, and leaving vacant other places that ought to be supplied, and where the talents here unnecessarily expended, could accomplish far more for the general cause.

One more remark. In asking how to make the most out of the present ministry, we are not hastily to think we can solve the problem, by simply *giving the ministry more to do.* This, in general, I might say, is an impossibility. Idle ministers, who try to live as easily as possible, there may be; but as a body, the evangelical ministers are hard-working and hard-worked men, with their hands full to overflowing; and it were a much more rational plan to think of increasing their usefulness by diminishing their burdens, than by adding to them. Coming now directly to the discussion of the subject, I might readily divide what I propose to say into two parts, one for the people, and the other for the ministers. But I prefer to unite them, and let each make his own appropriation.

I. My first remark, then is: That one way of making the present number of ministers most available, is *to employ them entirely in their specific and appropriate work.*

Their proper work is the preaching of the Gospel and the care of souls. I lay no stress on the technical meaning of the word *preaching*, and do not overlook the fact, that in the work given him to do, the minister may make use of various means and instrumentalities. He may legitimately employ the press and the school in the spread and circulation of christian knowledge. Preaching is not confined to oral utterances from the pulpit, nor the cure of souls to pastoral oversight. Still, to explain and enforce the word of God, to proclaim " the unsearchable riches of Christ" to those who can be brought to hear, must be regarded as the appropriate work of him who has been ordained to the ministry of Christ—a work for which nothing else can be a substitute. Yet, as men and citizens, ministers are connected with human society by many ties of interest and association. Their investiture with the office of the ministry does not disrobe them of their privileges and duties as men and citizens. Though their office be a spiritual one, and their affections should be heavenly, they have a part to bear in the secularities of life, and they are especially expected to be interested in all those secularities which belong to the province of morals: in all those departments of social well-being which are most obviously affected by moral and intellectual influences. Naturally, by the very humanizing and elevating spirit of the religion which they preach, they feel themselves drawn towards efforts for the reformation of manners and morals, the spread of virtue, and of sound learning. And society seems by a sort of instinct to look to them to take a vigorous hold of such things, and to be, if not leaders, yet earnest supporters and favorers of such efforts. These seem to fall naturally within their province; and the people, confiding in their ability, and their interest in them, commit these things largely to their charge. And they on their part, feel themselves impelled by their own feelings of interest in them, and their conviction of the serious bearing of all these things on the work of the world's evangelization, and by the calls of the people, to take in some measure the oversight of them.

But it is a question whether too much is not expected of the ministry in these respects; and whether strength is not expended on some of them, which might be employed to better purpose in the more specific work of studying and preaching the gospel. It is a question whether too much of ministerial strength is not expended in schools and academies, and colleges, and seminaries, and benevolent institutions. Is it absolutely necessary that secretaries and agents of our numerous and excellent religious and benevolent institutions, the professors in our colleges, the teachers in our academies, the editors of our religious newspapers and periodicals, should be clergymen? I cannot see the necessity for this. I can see *advantages* in such an arrangement. But I can also see advantages in having pious and intelligent laymen occupying these posts. Men acquainted with the practical business of life, moving in various currents of society, having advantages for knowing men and things, which the secluded habits and the professional character of the minister prevent his obtaining. There would be the advantage of drawing out into active service for the cause of religion much power that would otherwise be but imperfectly used. And there would be, I think, the advantage of linking more closely together various departments of social christian life,—of making the members of the church feel more the responsibility and the privileges of membership. It would take away from many of these matters what sometimes seems to be professional, and official; as if falling within the line of ministerial duty, but apart from the duty of private christians who must be busy about their secular affairs. When men see that these offices may be filled with laymen, they will feel that to attend to these things, to work for them, is *their* work, not simply the work of the ministry.

Facts testify to the practicability and utility of filling many of these positions with laymen. We can all readily point to men in almost all these department, not invested with the ministerial office, laboring in the spirit of Christ with great success. With regard to our theological seminaries we must make some exception to this position. Perhaps the peculiar training and experience of ministerial education and life, are essential qualifications for those who are to educate ministers. But here we may seriously ask whether there is not an unjustifiable *waste* of ministers as well as of money, by the multiplication of these seminaries on denominational and local grounds? Do we need so many seminaries? Have we a right so to appropriate so many of our best ministers? Grant that ministers in almost all the positions alluded to may do well; that it is very desirable to have them; that in some respects they may do far more than laymen,—still, what if we can employ them to better advantage in their own specific field of labor? Grant that a minister may do far more good in one of these positions, than he could as a pastor. Still, if we can put in the place which he occupies a layman, who would do just as much there as himself, but who otherwise would be doing comparatively little for the cause of Christ, and let him be employed in the specific work of the ministry, has not the ministry and the church been so much the gainer?

I am far from saying that no ministers should be employed in any of the cases under consideration. There are ministers now engaged in some of our religious and benevolent, and educational institutions, who are accomplishing a work of unspeakable importance, and whom we could ill afford to spare to fill any pastoral charge to which they might be called. It is very desirable, perhaps, that in some of the cases alluded to, ministers and laymen should be associated. Still, the exception does not make the *rule; and it does* not hinder our looking at the subject in its general aspects. And if we should grant what is by no means apparent,—that ministers would make better presidents of colleges, professors, teachers, secretaries, agents for the collecting of money, for the publishing and distributing of bibles, tracts, and other religious books, editors of religious periodicals, lecturers on temperance, &c., than laymen,—still it is a question deserving a fair consideration, whether it would not be better on the whole (I do not stop to consider the exceptional cases), to put all these at work in the specific duties of the ministry, and fill their places with pious, able, energetic laymen.

It may be said,—"*But would you put all these affairs beyond the supervision and control of the ministry?*" I answer, No. But this control should be exercised through the legitimate channel of the pulpit, and the pastoral care; by such an influence as a faithful and able ministry will ever exert over intelligent and pious laymen. The pulpit is to strike the key note for all our church action. The ministry will do most there.

Again, it may be said,—"*It is impossible to find laymen to do this work willing to encounter the self-denial and sacrifice necessary.*" To this we may reply: that is the very thing that we want. We want such a spirit of devotion throughout our churches, as will lead men readily to consecrate themselves to God's service. I know very well that we need laymen engaged in secular business who may be accumulating wealth for the support of the gospel and its institutions. But the resources of the church will ever be sufficient to meet her wants, provided there be a right heart in her members. Her workmen, whether lay or clerical, ought to receive remuneration for their work. But there is no reason why pious and intelligent laymen, should not make sacrifices, and voluntarily encounter toil, and live on small salaries, for the sake of Christ, as well as ministers. The call to self-denial, to unreserved self-dedication, does not belong to the ministerial office. It lies farther back. It belongs to the christian. When a man takes upon him the vows of the Lord, then he gives himself up to the Lord. The ministry, to which various considerations of duty direct him, is only one way of fulfilling that vow. Church members, who it may be feared, sometimes feel a sort of superiority and self-satisfaction in the payment of the minister's salary, or in contributing to some cause for which he has been pleading, ought to know that they are just as much bound as he is to give up fair prospects of ease, and wealth, and honor, and self-indulgence, when the cause of Christ demands it.

Finally, it may be said,—"*That what is here proposed is virtually making ministers of laymen, and therefore what is gained?*" The answer is, Not so! We do propose that pious laymen should be well educated, and induced to do much of the work that is now given to the ministry to do. But it is on the very position, that they are, and will continue to be laymen. The ministry is a distinct office of divine appointment, with its own allotted and marked work. And it will even stand out as such before the church and the world. There are hundreds of pious educated men, who would shrink from assuming the responsibilities of that office,—who do not feel called of God to do it,—who believe themselves not adapted to be preachers and pastors,—men, who would never by any probability be ministers. They fully realize the importance of the ministerial work, but do not regard it as their work. Now what we plead for is that they will do that share of service which they can appropriately and advantageously do, and leave to ministers their specific work.

II.—But I must pass to another, though kindred topic. The ministry *is to be strengthened by the co-operation of the members of the churches.*

Under the previous head, we have looked at the subject in its more general relations to the church at large. I speak now of that co-operation which should be found in every congregation. There are many things which church members may do to promote the efficiency of the minister, and which they cannot expect him to do. There is, for instance, the care of the sabbath school, the support of prayer meetings, the conducting of missionary and charitable operations. There is much to be done by them in the very way of visiting each other; of paying attention to strangers,—of promoting brotherly love and harmony. The elders and deacons of a church may greatly relieve the pastor in many respects. The members may do much. His mind being free from anxiety, and his time from unnecessary drafts, he will be able to give himself more fully to study, and prayer and preaching: and so his profiting will appear unto all men. We all know that the highest prosperity of the whole is secured, when each man does faithfully his part. The wall of Jerusalem went up because each man worked faithfully in his place, over against his house, while all were organized and united by a controlling leader, and a common spirit. Aaron and Hur sustained the fainting strength of the great leader of Israel, and so the wavering army was rallied, and at the going down of the sun, they pealed the song of victory. Moses had his work to do. But he could not have done so much but for the aid of the elders, while in his ability to do good their interests were involved. The *whole* work of evangelizing does not depend on the ministry. There is much to be done which pastors cannot do. There are the exploration of destitute localities, the inducing of persons to come to hear the gospel preached, the oversight of the young; and other things by which any faithful, *working* congregation can do much to enhance the real efficiency of the minister. Whereas if the whole burden is thrown on him, his strength is taxed beyond endurance, his appropriate work is not done so well, and much is left undone that would contribute to the spread of the gospel.

III.—The efficiency of the ministry might be increased by *the practical prevalence of sound views on the subject of pastoral duty.*

The performance of pastoral visitation, especially in large parishes, is a heavy tax on the ministry. Of course it is a tax that must be paid. For it is essential to the healthful sustenance of the pastoral relation. A man cannot well be a pastor, acquainted with the wants of his people, and rightly dividing to them the word of life, who has not some personal acquaintance with them. He cannot in his preaching lay his touch upon the right chord of the many-stringed harp in man, or properly "minister to a mind diseased." He may not know when to lead to Sinai's fiery front, and when to Siloa's gentle brook. He may be hurling the arrows of judgment, when he should be applying the balm of Gilead. He may be building up the wall without, when some secret foe is poisoning the souls in their quietude. And then, for want of a word fitly spoken,—for want of a friendly voice speaking to the soul in private,—of the clasp of a loving hand amid the familiarities of home, where all that is merely professional, all that is ceremonial in the church and the pulpit, and the public preacher, is merged in the christian friend and pastor,—for want of this some poor soul may be stifling its convictions, hiding its sorrow, starving in the famine of a strange land, which might be lifted up and comforted, and filled with peace in communion with Christ. Pastoral visiting rightly performed has an important relation to the usefulness of him, to whom the Master gives the charge; "Feed my sheep—feed my lambs." But then, on the one hand the people must not be too exacting in these respects, and draw the minister away from those studies without which his ministrations cannot be profitable to them. *It is more important that he should preach well than that he should visit often.* On the other hand, it becomes the minister to guard himself against spending too much time in visiting; but more especially against allowing his visiting to lose altogether the character of religious or pastoral visitation. This is a point difficult of management: and, I presume, very few of us escape bitter regrets at our deficiency in this respect. The early ministers *preached the gospel from house to house.* But this was probably not formal preaching, but rather religious conversation, social and friendly expositions of the truth, and expressions of sympathy, and kind counsel and exhortation. If with a systematic arrangement we can so preach the gospel from house to house, our ministry will be rendered, with God's blessing, very useful. This is perhaps one of the needs of the ministry at the present day. The people have a vague wish to see the minister often. But it would be very difficult, in many cases to say why they wish to see him. They have a feeling that they are slighted if he does not call on them. And the minister feels that he must call to see his people. Yet how often is it a merely formal call that he makes? having this good, I acknowledge, that it keeps alive a friendly feeling between him and them, a great good in itself, but failing to reach the highest end at which the ambassador of Christ should ever aim.

IV.—It is highly important that we should give due power to the fact that *preaching the gospel is the grand function of the christian ministry.*

The christian ministry is of divine appointment, and in the work of the conversion of the world is not to be superseded by any other agency. There are diversities of gifts for the edifying of the body of Christ. It has already been admitted that other instrumentalities may rightly be employed for the spread of the gospel. But the oral instructions and exhortations of the preacher hold a place peculiar and above them all. We will not now pause to consider the divine wisdom displayed in this appointment,—in having a distinct body of men to represent and care for the cause of religion,—in committing to *men* "the ministry of reconciliation," —in using all the influence that resides in looks, and tone, and gesture, in human sympathy, in the going forth of heart to heart, to subdue men to love, and to reliance on Him, who became man, that with a man's voice, and a man's heart, He might win us back to his Father and ours. But, taking the fact as it is, we must set a high estimate on the function of the ministry, and not allow it to be brought down from the position which God has given it. We were not called to serve tables, to collect money, and superintend its disbursement, to write books, to edit papers, to teach schools, but we were called to *preach the gospel.* The pulpit is our place. The pulpit is our throne. There is to be the shining forth of our power. All those other things are good in their place. We may attend to them as Providence directs, and by some of them accomplish great good, honorably to the ministry. But they are not *the good thing* which has been committed to us by the gift of God, and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. And it is a fair question whether many of our ecclesiastical and evangelical operations have not had a tendency to lower our estimate of the character of the ministry, to obscure this its great office, by mingling it too much with secular matters, by making ministers beggars of money, managers of funds and business houses, and by sometimes attributing to tract distributers, family visitors, colporteurs, excellent and most praiseworthy laborers, a position above even the divine institution. Again, I say, the ministry has a function of its own, for which nothing else can be a substitute. And that function is preaching THE GOSPEL,

—the good, time-honored, heaven-sent, and heaven-blessed gospel,—the glad tidings of the bible,—the whole truth contained within our ark of the covenant, all luminous with the glory of the Shekinah,—reverently studied, —reverently enthroned in our own hearts,—reverently preached. Has not the power of the pulpit been weakened, I will not say by the introduction of heretical sentiments, or of a false philosophy,—but by a tendency to pander to popular taste,—to make the pulpit a theatre for the display of personal ability, by a running after new things,—saying odd, or dazzling things,—the bringing in of all topics of the time? It is not a mere canting inquiry, nor a question of ignorant and illiberal piety; has there not been to some extent an obscuring of the glory of Christ, a hiding of the solemn doctrines of sin and its effects, a keeping of the cross in the back ground? Has not the idea of *progress*,—not the sound healthy progress, whose excellence nothing but ignorance and prejudice can deny, but a diseased feverish idea of progress,—the rapid and extravagant spirit of the age, which would have a man live a century in a year, and is fertile in contrivances for swift locomotion, and labor saving, and is given to bold speculation and large expenditure,—has not this to some extent unhappily affected the pulpit? We may rely upon it that we have power for good only as we preach the truth as it is in Jesus. And the more we honor this function of the ministry, the more we concentrate our strength upon it, making all other things, literary, scientific, social, reformatory, educational, subordinate, and tributary to it, the greater will be the power and efficiency of the aministry.

V.—There is still one other topic to which I must ask your attention: *It is the practical holding forth of a nobler view of the relation between the minister and the people.*

Directly contrary to the theory of our denomination at least, is the notion which yet too much prevails, that the bond which holds minister and people together is simply one of mutual convenience; an ordinary contract which may lightly be dissolved, when either for any cause, however slight, becomes dissatisfied with the other. It is a miserable idea of God's ministry, that the minister is simply a man hired at a given rate, and that the lowest possible, to do a given amount of work; or that a man may become a minister simply for the sake of a profession, by which he may respectably earn his livelihood as easily as possible. Higher and holier is the relation between God's minister and God's people—a sacred marriage, not to be entered into for sordid motives, nor without God's sanction, and not to be dissolved without his ordering. Of it we may say of a truth, *those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.*

Now these are *facts*, however humiliating the mention of them may be. Notwithstanding the complaint of the fewness of ministers, there is a large body of ordained ministers, not employed in the work of the ministry. Whenever a vacancy occurs, there are always numbers who would be glad to secure the place; at this very hour many pastors are anxious to leave their present fields of labor for others; many are pressed down under burdens almost too heavy to bear, suffering for want, not only of the comforts, but even of some of the necessaries of life; others suffering from unkindness and opposition, pains more poignant than those of hunger. It is a fact, as more than one of our best informed and most judicious ministers has remarked, that no class of minds of the same order, work so cheaply as the ministry. Many of our excellent lay brethren, and of ministers in the large and wealthier churches, have no idea of the privation, the actual suffering that is endured by many ministers and their families. It is only in some of our cities, and larger towns, and richer country parishes, that the ministry is well supported; and the shifting and contriving to which ministers and their families are obliged to resort, are what no intellectual men should be subjected to, and what no people would allow to exist did they fully apprehend it. I may speak thus freely, because personally I have no ground of complaint. God has cast my lot among a people who kindly care for their minister's wants. But I do feel for my brethren. I am interested for the honor and usefulness of the ministry; and I confess that something like indignation is at my heart, when I think of the pittances bestowed on men at whose feet I would sit and learn wisdom—men who would adorn any station—as I see the salary grudgingly bestowed, and, as if it were a gift of charity. No; the minister is not a hireling; he is not a beggar—an object of charity. Starve him the church may, but in starving him she will starve herself. The minister does not need the church; it is the church that needs the minister, or rather, their cause and interests are one. They should be deeply interested in each other; and while he spends all his strength for his parish, his parish should amply supply all his wants.

But it is not only salary that they should give him, but also respect and confidence; a bearing with his imperfections, an interest in him and his office, which should lead them to rally around him, and uphold him, and hold to him, notwithstanding the insinuations of the malicious, notwithstanding unfavorable comparisons made between him and other ministers. He wants food for the heart, as well as provision for his physical wants, the cordial of love that cheers the soul. And the minister on his part should be willing to endure much and to make sacrifices and great allowances, rather than hastily abandon his field of labor, much more the active work of the ministry. How many of our dissolutions of pastoral relations are to be ascribed to pride and discontent? on the part of the *people*, wanting a minister more eloquent, more renowned; a great man—finding fault with slight things which a little charity would overlook, or a kind attention to his wants would prevent? and on the part of the *minister*, wanting a wider field, a place of greater distinction; dissatisfied because things do not go just to his liking; unwilling to "endure hardness;" disheartened because of slight difficulties? How many men now out of charges might be employed if they were willing to accept of places which would welcome their services? or if the people would judge more wisely and charitably; look for piety and usefulness more than for display, and be ready to give to ministers laboring for them a sufficient support?

Far be it from me to censure exclusively or indiscriminately the people, or to think the ministry free from blame. I have already indicated that a false pride, a self-indulgence, may operate in some cases on the ministry. Parishes have often much to bear from their pastors. The shade may be altogether on that side. The people have difficulties of their own to contend with also; and one of these, here worthy of special notice, arises of a state of things to which allusion has already been made—*the injudicious multiplication of feeble churches.* I do not mean to say that the fact that a church is feeble is clear proof that it was injudiciously organized. But here we find one of the causes of embarrassment and difficulty in the work of the ministry, and the carrying on of our evangelical operations. Each of these churches wants a pastor, even though *it has neither* ability to sustain a minister, nor work enough for a minister *to do. This is* a grave matter, having most important bearing on the usefulness of the ministry, and the spread of the kingdom of Christ. Let us consider whether, in our zeal to extend the church or the denomination, we may not be weakening rather than increasing strength. Undoubtedly there must be in sparsely populated regions, feeble churches. But might not a system of *itinerancy* be adopted for them; so that, instead of having several men employed in a given district, each doing but part of a full man's work, one minister could sufficiently supply the wants of several of them? In our cities there will also be churches feeble in the outset; but great care obviously should be exercised in the incipient steps towards an organization, both in the choice of localities, and the collection and arrangement of materials. One of the safest and healthiest plans of church extension is that of *colonization*. But no minister should be appointed to a given locality, unless with the reasonable prospect of finding there a sufficient field for labor; and all new enterprises thus reasonably commenced, ought to receive the countenance and support of the older and established churches. The mothers ought to seek the prosperity of the daughters. These should not be left to bear their burdens alone; but in the early stages of their struggle, members, and means, and sympathy, and prayers, should be given to their aid. While for these localities and smaller communities, which cannot thus be reached, a system of Home Missions and of lay reading might be employed.

But while this and other causes render difficult the proper support of the ministry by the people, the minister and the people should remember, that they are working together in a holy cause, and for a noble object. They should entertain a high regard for their relation, and should not hastily or for slight cause cast each other off. Let the people care for the comfort of the minister, and he will do more work, and live longer to work. Let the minister "make full proof" of his ministry, and he will accomplish most, will hold his people with "hooks of steel," and be happy. We need all our strength. It is a great pity that the restlessness, or pride, or parsimony of the people, or the restlessness, or pride, or ambition, or self-indulgence of the minister, should deprive us of any.

Let me now invite your attention to two or three concluding remarks:

1. *This discussion has important relations to the great subject of education.* An educated ministry, all important as this is, is not the only want of the church. We want educated, pious men, to work in other departments of Christ's service. And it is a question which will yet force itself on our consideration, whether the present system of beneficiary education must not be considerably modified; whether we are doing wisely in directing attention to the education of young men for the ministry alone; whether the church should not throw open her beneficiary provisions to a large number of young men. And all this involves the inquiry which is now awakening no little interest, whether a better plan, say scholarship foundations, with liberal conditions, might not take the place of the present system of annual allowances. I can only indicate these lines of thought without following them out in detail.

2. The discussion has *important relations to the dissolution of the pastoral relation, and the laying aside of the ministerial office or work.* We believe in a settled, not an itinerating ministry; in a perpetual, not a changeable ordination. I would be very far from using the severe and uncharitable language which is sometimes employed with reference to brethren who have given up the ministry for other pursuits. I know how unjust are some of the judgments pronounced, and how

painfully they grate upon the tender sensibilities of pure-minded, conscientious men. Of those whose strength has been exhausted by arduous labor, and whom the infirmities of age disable for active service, of course, we can never speak but with profound respect. Of those whom disease has unfitted for ministerial work, while yet they are able to be useful in other spheres of life, how can we ever speak but with sympathy for that disappointment which they deeply feel, and with fraternal regard, and good wishes for their success in their appointed field? We honor those, who, under a solemn sense of duty, have quitted their pastoral charges and loved work, for professorships or agencies, to which they have clearly been called; and those of our brethren who have been driven from the ministry by *poverty*, because they could not find therein a support for their families, and could find it elsewhere; those who have been discouraged by a seeming want of success; by the apathy or the unkindness of the people among whom they have labored, or driven from one charge and another, because of some infelicities of their own temper or habits; or because of the restless intriguing of dissatisfied and troublesome individuals; for them, even though our judgment may not always approve of their course, we would entertain the kindest feeling and most earnest sympathy. We know how hard it is for a man to work under the pressure of wants or the heavier pressure of a troubled soul. Still, making all allowances, and in perfect charity, may we not say, there are many men now out of the ministry, who ought to be in it? May we not take the position, that nothing but the clear indications of God's will can justify a minister in leaving his post, or a people in seeking a change of pastors? On the other hand, I would make full allowance for all the difficulties under which churches labor, and would not unjustly charge them with cruelty to their ministers. But this I wish to say, that there ought to prevail a mutual spirit of accommodation and self-denial. We ought not easily to be dissatisfied with each other; we ought not to be given to change; we must expect difficulties, and ought not readily to succumb to them. No minister is perfect; no people are perfect. Each must bear with the other, while each strives to be faithful. There is a proper spirit of independence; there need be no cringing, no begging, no self-seeking; but the disciple must not expect better things than his Lord. It will not excuse the parsimony or unkindness of the people, but it will comfort the poor minister to remember the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. And the work of the ministry is too important to be hastily laid aside. We cannot afford to lose ministerial labors. Changes must take place. Pastoral relations must be dissolved. But if the people would treat ministers with proper kindness, and if the minister would be self-denying, forbearing, christian-like, need these be very frequent? Or need they ever be in unkindness, with a sore spirit?

Finally. Whatever serves to strengthen the attachment of brethren in the ministry to each other, and the ties of love binding together ministers and people, of the same denomination, and of different denominations, will aid to make the ministry most available, the few among the many. There will thus be promoted a spirit of catholicity—of mutual accommodation—which will break down the hedges of sectarianism, and instead of confining efforts within limited bounds, will give them a wide scope, and will tend to secure the most judicious distribution of labor. As promoting such a spirit, I love some of those great gatherings of the people of all denominations, where ministers and laymen stir up one another's love and zeal. On a narrower scale, such meetings as we are now holding, where ministers and elders come together from their various fields of labor, to seek the good of Zion, and to tell each other of the Lord's doings, may be made to subserve the same end. Only, the emotions excited at such times must not be allowed to subside without action, but must influence action. We must go home to do our work; the strong to bear the burdens of the weak; each to help the other. I pray God that with us may be the spirit of brotherly love, and of unselfish devotion to our Master. May the good Spirit, who during the past year has so highly favored this church and congregation with the effusion of his grace, rule our hearts, and make our assembling in this charge good for us and good for the people who kindly receive us; and may all be for his glory.

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SERMON DCXXXVIII.

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IMMEDIATE CARE FOR THE SOUL'S WELFARE ENFORCED.

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"—MATT. xvi. 26.

VERY much has been said of the dignity of human nature. Of its capabilities, much may be said with truth. There is discoverable, amidst the ruin which the fall has wrought upon man, elements and susceptibilities of high and important character, clearly indicating that great things may be made to attend on his destiny, that infinite things lie within his reach. The Saviour, by the emphatic inquiries just cited, intimates to us that we hold within, a soul, which a world ought not to purchase, which a world ought not to put to hazard.

I would now turn your attention to the spiritual being, the soul. I would waken a greater interest in it. I would prompt you to immediate care for its welfare.

I. To produce this effect, let our first consideration be the fact that the soul is not subject to destruction.

Although the soul in its nature is not indestructible, yet by the will of God it is so. It is Heaven's decree, made known every where in the Scriptures, that the spiritual being within us shall never cease to be. This single fact invests the soul at once with infinite importance. Every object sinks before us the moment we are informed that it is temporary. Point us to the most solid structure, which the pride or folly of men have erected; point us even to the everlasting hills, the great globe itself, mighty and durable as they are; when you tell us they are growing old, and one day are all to pass away, and no place be found for them, you have essentially shorn them of their impressiveness, have greatly diminished our interest in them. You and I have a soul that shall outlive the heavens and the earth, the works of man and the institutions of society; and like its Creator, beyond the reach of changes or destruction, dwell in its own eternity! I feel, I confess, a profound respect for that one thing alone, of all this crowded terrestrial scene, which shall stand up imperishable and eternal, and see the whole mighty maze and mass of things about it tumbling into dissolution. It rises to a value and importance infinitely above them all. Our anxieties and cares for this mortal evil and these worldly matters are misplaced. Let us leave the things that are temporal, passing while you behold them, and gather our thoughts, gather our cares around the spirit, that will live as long as God who made it—this spirit that will have duties and interests when all besides it shall have passed away.

II. Another fact, showing us that we should regard the immortal spirit within us with great interest, is its capacity for intelligence.

Were we to select the most unfavorable instances among the most ignorant and unlettered of the human family, we should find the intelligence possessed at the age of fifty, is an important amount beyond that of the first hour of life. If you could follow such a mind, even though without book, teacher, or guide, you would witness it active and and vigilant almost at every waking moment; catching knowledge of objects immediately around it; then looking further, and traversing and examining a wider circle; and then a wider circle still, as years advanced—ever learning, and ever more eager to learn, and constantly increasing in strength and facilities to learn.

You have always loved the old simile which likens the mind in its growing to the acorn, shooting itself forth, first in a single germ, and then in an expanding blade, and then into branches, upward and outward, on every side till it has pushed itself forth into a noble, luxuriant, spreading tree. You feel the force of it as you look back and remember the prattler of your own fireside, and now see the growth of mind which has taken place, and notice how much wider is the circle over which it moves. A mind, under the care of skillful teachers and lured to mental acquisitions, by the hope of gratification and reward, would give you still more surprise and pleasure by its constantly expanding and treasuring of knowledge. What expansion—what treasured riches had the mind of Newton, Locke, Milton, and Bacon attained to before they left the world! How little of it all had they at the first five or ten years of their being!

Susceptibility and tendency to expand with growing intelligence is constitutional. The very framework and structure of the soul are a framework and structure for acquiring and retaining knowledge. If it exist and be in health, it must act in this manner. The question is not whether the mind shall be educated, it will be! Now, then, contemplate the futurity of the immaterial spirit which you hold within you. Remembering that its first acts are efforts for knowledge, its first improvement is expansion with gathering intelligence—remembering that it attains, besides new expansion and new intelligence, a power to expand and to learn at every succeeding moment of its existence, and that it exist forever and ever.

You perceive it only *enters* on its career in the present life. Death forms an event important to its progress ; throws off a heavy, diseased, dissolving mass of matter, which, hanging about the soul, imposes clogs, and suffocations, and restraints upon its movements. These depressing causes—these pressures upon the spirit being removed—unrestrained, unobstructed—with all that God has created matter or spirit, the Creator himself, its own nature, duties and destinies to study—the soul must grow in intelligence beyond any examples exhibited here—must make attainments of which we can probably form no adequate conception. As there will be restraints, so there will be no approachable boundaries to its movements. If we would follow its progress in knowledge under these new and happier facilities, after death has given the soul its own freedom and power, and a field to move in no narrower than the universe, we should need ourselves to be released from our present restraints and obstructions. To follow these freed spirits in their progress in intelligence, we must be freed spirits ourselves. I have only to remind you that you have such a capacious and susceptible soul—a soul not only formed immortal, but formed for this immeasurable, eternal progress in intelligence.

Noble and important indeed is the spiritual being, the occupant of this earthly tabernacle ! What do you carry within you ? A soul fitted in an eternal progress in knowledge and intellect and power, to approach forever the infinite mind of the omniscient God himself ! How like its Maker may be soul ! How is your neglect of it reproved—your worldliness, your toils and solicitudes for sensual good shown to be infinite folly ! Ought we not to care more for this immortal part of us, so eternally progressive in knowledge, and cease our feverish ardour for this fleetingness, nothingness, by which we are surrounded ? Away this solicitude and labor for this mortal coil ; the soul, the intelligent, expanding soul—let this be your care.

III. There is another fact which will be thought to give still higher interest and importance to this spiritual being which we call the soul, and waken us to greater efforts for its good. I mean its capacity for virtue, moral excellence.

The soul's capacity for intelligence endlessly increasing, receives its importance and interest chiefly from its intimate connection with our moral susceptibilities. Our intellectual faculties first minister to the moral affections—assisting to feed, sustain, enrich, elevate them—then communicate abroad the blessings which the heart devises and designs. Moral excellence is the original source of all that is interesting and valuable connected with the soul of man and with his destiny.

We need not attempt any metaphysical dissertation on the nature and attributes of virtue. Nor indeed is it necessary to repeat all the definitions that have been given of it. I would only say so much as to turn your minds upon the simple idea of moral goodness. Virtue has been described doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God. It has been divided into three classes of duties. 1. Duties towards God: as piety, reverence, resignation, and gratitude. 2. Towards other men: as justice, charity, fidelity, loyalty. 3. Towards ourselves: as chastity, sobriety, temperance, care of health and life.

The Scriptures very accurately have included all virtue in these two comprehensive precepts: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and the neighbour as thyself." Obedience to these two laws would include the adequate exercise of all the emotions necessary and proper towards every one of the objects in the universe,and these emotions would prompt to all the conduct due in all the relations in which a human being can be placed. Benevolent affections, and the corresponding conduct to which such affections give birth, toward God, toward all men, toward ourselves, is a simple definition of virtue, moral goodness, which all can understand entirely. We will keep this intelligible idea before us.

That this our internal spiritual being is capable of being virtuous instead of vicious, of good deeds instead of bad ones, does not admit of any question; but to what extent are we capable of moral goodness? In what estimation should we regard it? What interest should we feed in this capacity for virtue? Contemplate one of the best exemplifications of moral goodness in the present world.

Virtue thrives best in the middle walks of life, equally removed from temptation to the luxury and dissipation of the fashionable, on the one hand, and the corruptions of the degraded, hopeless, and abandoned on the other. Our instance of elevated virtue shall be sought for, from this medium condition of human life—not indeed untempted to sin, for then it could have no trial of virtue—but possessing partial immunity from the grosser contaminations of the world. To illustrate our capacity for moral worth, I refer to an individual moral portrait. This man was originally of sour and complaining temper, passionate and severe, making himself uncomfortable as a companion. He is now eminently amiable and unruffled in his spirit; so uniform is the softness and sweetness of his feelings, on almost all occasions, that he is supposed to need no personal discipline. His feelings flow gently on like the deep sheltered stream which no winds can reach, no outward causes agitate. He has his preferences, but does not manifest impatience whenever they are not consulted. He loves prosperity, but his soul is too deep a fountain to be set in commotion by ordinary adversities.

As a social being in his several relations to others around him, to friends, relatives, fellow-citizens, benefactors, dependents, his character and behaviour are what you would infer from the serenity and subdued mildness of his general disposition. One trait of character too rare in the world belongs to him in all his relations. I mean honesty, pure honesty, in its largest sense. When he speaks, he intends to speak the truth; to utter what he thinks and feels exactly: he declares himself outwardly what he is inwardly. In his acts towards others he endeavors to be strictly equitable. He endeavors to be faithful entirely to every trust reposed in him. It is understood in the community that his verbal promise is as good, because as surely fulfilled, as any paper bond, signed, sealed, and delivered before witnesses. If you go to him for advice, he does not inquire with himself how he may so counsel as to flatter and please you, or receive some advantage to himself. He gives you his best judgment-he points you to the course he would himself take. If you come to be acquainted sufficiently to obtain his special friendship, you will find it true—a friendship for you as a fellow-being, a man—not for you as an honored or prospered individual simply, cold and strange to you the moment your distinction and wealth being gone you become as weak as any other man. He seems warmer and more active when you most need and are most unable to make him any return You may never distrust him, he will not forsake you at all, so long as you are worthy. O, are there, indeed, in the great mass of human depravity, such specimens of frank, fast, honest friendship! Who is he? Pray point us to such virtue in this fallen world! You will discover this individual, on observing him closely, to be directing his efforts, though he engage in the ordinary cares and business of life, fixing his interests and affections upon two special objects—the rendering all men, whom he can influence, better and happier.

He would dissipate gloom from every mind, remove the pressure from every heart. He would be a guide to every orphan that wanders and weeps without a helper. He would avert the calamities that he sees gathering upon the unsheltered heads of the poor. He would encourage the idle to industry—he would allure the ignorant to knowlege. He would introduce harmony between alienated families, friendship and peace between all that have fallen out by the way. Many are the hearts which beat quicker with joy for his ministration of kindness. Many are persons who are led to competence, knowledge, usefulness, self-respect, and peace, by his efforts and example.

He does not forget that there is a better world to be sought, a worse one to be escaped. You may see him kindly reminding a neighbor of the guilt and danger that wait upon transgression; referring him to the invitations of the gospel; endeavoring to induce him to accept them by a development before him of all the dreadful infinity of eternal woe as the doom of incorrigible sinners, and by pointing him to the heaven of heavens as the everlasting inheritance of the penitent and believing. You may hear him referring an alarmed and anxious one, who is crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" to the Saviour's words, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." In his efforts for others he does not forget himself. He fears God and keeps his commandments; he "allures to brighter worlds, and leads the way."

But who is this amiable being, of such inward heavenly temper and such purity of life, that loves and obeys his Maker; that makes it the effort and aim of life to reform and improve the character and the conduct of all his fellow-men; to make all hearts purer, all hearts happier—to gather as many as he may under God into heaven from this fallen world? Who is this minister of mercy? Has any such man lived and breathed among us? We have not seen such men in this selfish, avaricious, wicked world. But is not man capable of this? Have I described any thing unattainable? May not education and grace make every man such in a larger or smaller sphere? Have I come up in this moral portrait to what you have conceived of Paul, or even of Howard and many others? If I have, is not this character of loveliness and kindness possible to all, and these paths of usefulness open to all, this walk with God free to all?

I have not ascribed perfection to this amiable friend of God. A very pure and virtuous being he is; but not one attribute, I allege, not one act have I ascribed to him that might not belong to every individual of this audience. Thus we are all capable of virtue, moral goodness, goodness of soul prompting to outward excellence of conduct. I do not touch the question of moral inability. I know that man is depraved wholly, that every heart is corrupt to the core. But under the power of education and the grace of God we are thus capable of godlike virtue. Such are our susceptibilities here. But the soul, if it enter upon a course of virtue, *only enters* upon it in the present world—only just wakes, and starts forth on its career of goodness here—only just begins to throb with holy exercises and to put forth outward labors of love. Death, more important to our progress in virtue than to our growth in knowledge, removes the spirit from all the instruments and allurements of sin.

How may a saint grow in holiness when received into heaven, when released from temptation, and when surrounded by every possible motive to moral goodness! God, high on his eternal throne, will unfold to the spirit his glory, and the fullest, loftiest, richest emotions of that spirit gather and fix upon him; its highest, best service will be rendered to him. Fellow spirits are around it to be loved and blessed. Its efforts, so interrupted on earth, are now unceasing; so imperfect then, are perfect now; its love, so often chilled and misdirected then, is pure and undiverted now. What it ought to feel, it does feel; what it ought to do, it performs. How long is this to remain? Pure spirits, will they always be pure? entirely as they should be, rich in goodness, untouched by any impurity or imperfection, never, never, never wearied, never interrupted, never unfaithful? Will they always be holy? Yes, always holy, and more and more enriched with holiness as the ages of eternity roll away. Yes, more and more pure, more and more holy; rather more and more enriched with moral goodness. They never can be more than perfectly holy, such as they are when they enter heaven.

But as the intellect learns more and more of the Divine Being, spreads itself more extensively over his infinite affairs, and comprehends them more, the emotions towards God will rise to corresponding ardour, will swell to corresponding elevation. The interests of fellow souls in their large capacities, in the long eternal course of intelligence and purity, and happiness before them, will be constantly, as ages roll away, better understood and appreciated, and each spirit will feel intenser passion for all the rest, and put forth more exertions to enrich them with goodness and glory. Holy world! Pure spirits! God in the centre of them! Immortality their own! a long, eternal course of increasing holiness to run! Who can measure your virtue, your moral goodness, when some millions of ages shall have passed away—when you shall have stretched on your course into eternity, farther than the intellectual powers can reach! You are lost in the attempted conception. O, that we had words to tell you the glory there is to be revealed! Crowns, thrones, and worlds, what are ye all when compared with it! May I stand up at last a pure spirit like my Maker; his virtue my virtue; my close resemblance to the holy God a closer one constantly—forever! What else, my soul, is worth thy care, all else tread beneath thee! Be an angel! Enter upon an eternal course of holiness!

And every hearer here has a soul capable of such a high course of glory, and honor, and immortality. This is the career, then, we all may run. Leave, then, these meaner things. I must earnestly reprove your worldliness—your untiring, overweening care of your outward self—your pursuit of earthly riches and pleasures. Such objects all shrink into utter insignificance before these grand interests of the soul.

IV. A fourth fact, which gives interest and importance to our spiritual being and should waken our care for its welfare, is its capacity for happiness,

We learn by our experience and by observation of others, that human happiness is dependant upon virtue. Animals without reason and conscience may have negative enjoyment without any moral character. But man, formed to discern between right and wrong, to approve virtue and condemn vice, and to feel himself accountable at the bar of his own judgment, at the higher bar of God, cannot be happy without being good, and he cannot be good without being happy. Every person has learned by looking within upon himself, and observed in the case of others, that, though adverse and untoward events make deductions from our enjoyments, yet so far as there is integrity of principle, purity of intention, excellence of conduct, and consciousness that this is so, so far there is happiness alway. sweet peace, a delicious enjoyment absorbing the soul, so that is feels the refreshing of the internal waters of life, of which, if a man drink he shall never thirst again. The soul is full; for the time asks no better joys; overflows with bless. Such seasons all good men know, when, their sins and imperfections out of view, they feel the consciousness of moral goodness, and there comes over the spirit the assurance that God looks upon them with approbation, and they approve and respect themselves

Observation of others has often furnished us with similar examples. You have often seen happiness in circumstances so unpropitious as to leave you in no doubt that it must have been fed from an *inward* fountain of moral goodness, affording a consciousness of integrity. Have you never entered an abode of poverty and seclusion from the world, and marked the simple, calm pleasure, which was there, habitually there, though there was *nothing* in the outward world to afford it. It was good feeling toward God and man, and so far as opportunity and power was given, good doing. It was moral goodness, and the testimony of a good conscience.

Persons are often seen with afflictions beating terribly upon them, their property scattered, their friends dead, their expectations cut off, their earthly prospects perfectly dark—seen still calm and happy. They have the best of all their possessions still left to them, a treasure beyond the reach of vicissitude and trouble, I mean their virtue—a love of truth and righteousness is their own, which no power can take from them. This made Paul and Silas happy in their prison, John in his banishment, the Martyrs in their sufferings, Christians generally in their reverses and disappointments, and in their death. All the blessed anticipations of hope in the two worlds have their foundation in moral worth. The whole current of Scripture corresponds with this representation.

No one truth probably is so often in the Bible, as that the good are happy; that virtue and happiness are united under the Divine Government inseparably and forever. One object of the Scriptures throughout in recovering a fallen race to goodnesss, is to make them happy. Accordingly,this sentiment is reiterated in every form, unceasingly reiterated in the Scriptures that the good are happy. Great peace have all they that love thy law; shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace; in the greatest of all extremities he is happy. Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. Happy is the man that feareth God alway. He that keepeth the law. happy is he. Blessed, happy is he, that doeth rightheteousness at all times. The Lord blesseth the habitation of the just. Blessed are the meek, said the Saviour, the merciful, the pure in heart, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. The hope of the righteous shall be gladness. The fruit of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. God giveth a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy! The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall enter into peace. Christ will say, Well done, good and faithful servant. enter into the joy of thy Lord. The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father!

Such every where is the representation of the Holy Scriptures. It is the universal and eternal law of the universe, that goodness shall be ever attended with happiness, as wickedness is with suffering. Neither can be separated. The whole spirit and conduct of the divine government depend on this union. Every thing is provided and arranged, both for time and eternity in reference to this fact. The divine purposes, the system of divine providence—all that has or will come to pass, all the law of God, all the promise of grace,the probation of time,the retribution of eternity are dependant upon that great fact that to be good is to be happy: to be wicked is to be miserable. It will never be otherwise unless God leaves his own universe, his government is extinguished,and his moral system rushes into confusion and universal ruin.

If thus the spiritual being within us possesses capacity for goodness, as has been represented, if it may run an immortal course, ever and endlessly opening and enriching itself with moral excellence; so may, so must it run a corresponding career of happiness. If the soul's virtue increases constantly and for ever, so must its fruit, true enjoyment. If the soul have no other qualities but goodness, so will it possess no other emotions but those of happiness. Is there no limit to the progress of its moral excellence, so is there no boundary to the happiness it will attain. Happiness, immeasurable, perfect, infinite, is laid out before the spirit; an entire eternity allotted to it to drink in constantly larger, richer, fuller measures. As its holiness, so its happiness is progressive, measureless, illimitable, eternal. Gabriel, fast by the eternal throne, tells us if thou hast no eye to penetrate the future, no heart to conceive and appreciate the blessedness of the long, eternal course yet before thee; tell, if thou canst, what thou hast been, delineate thy course of intelligence, purity, enjoyment. Let us know what is before us; we do follow thee; thy high, glorious course is ours also. We shall attain thy knowledge, we shall receive all thy virtue; we shall feel all the raptures of thy bliss. Wouldst thou be happier than the archangel? Thou mayest be; be good, and thou shalt be. As thou passest on age after age, thy desires shall spread themselves immeasurably forth, and they all shall be met and satisfied; thy heart shall expand so that worlds will be too small for it, and it shall be satisfied, and so shall thy eternity be filled.

Hast thou, Christian, ever known a favored, religious hour—an hour of Scripture reading, an hour of prayer, an hour of hope, inspiring hope; when heaven seemed near and open, and thou didst enter in, and forgetful of all earthly evils, didst join with the just made perfect in acts of worship before the throne; and thou didst see the smile of Jehovah resting upon thy service, and feel the delicious peace and joy of a heart at rest upon the bosom of divine everlasting love, and committing thyself to God didst breathe out thy whole spirit in the words of a saint of old, Whom I have in heaven but thee and thine? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee—such one day shall be every hour, only it shall be all reality, instead of being partly in anticipation; only it shall be completely filled with bliss; only every hour shall be happier than the last. And we are all susceptible of a character which will secure to us this full, perfect, ever increasing, immeasurable, eternal happiness.

V. Another fact adds greatly to the interest we should feel in this spirit within. It may be lost.

The prospective possessions and blessedness provided for our spiritual being now referred to, are not assured to us. They are proffered, but we may never attain them. Your spirit, my friend, may never run this glorious high course; it may never swell and open with intelligence, and holiness, and enjoyment, rising constantly a brighter and more blissful spirit towards the eternal throne. All this may be lost, though pressed upon acceptance, and another career be run, immortal, but not virtuous, of increasing intelligence to some extent, but not of happiness. This spiritual being of ours may sink to perdition, instead of rising to heaven, according as we are religious or irreligious here on earth. If the soul be sent away to run its course thus with ever enlarging capacities for suffering, its doom will be terrible, infinitely dreadful.

Consider this doom, that our solicitude and sympathies and interests may be the more awakened in behalf of this spiritual immortal being within. What is the loss of the soul? This is a subject on which I have little to say. All language fails here. Imagination itself cowers and shrinks from such a theme, inconceivably momentous, dreadfully infinite. Inadequate, utter feebleness, as are all our thoughts and language on this subject of the loss of the soul, we are in danger of being left to learn what it is by sad and eternal experience. We must therefore consider a few moments, and speak of it as well as we can. He that loses his soul, and thus goes down to spend his eternity in the great prison of the universe, loses all the pleasures of mind, all the pleasures, I mean, from the exercise and use of the intellectual faculties. The contemplation of truth, the employment and expansion of the understanding, constitute, no doubt, an important item of the happiness of the righteous in heaven.

The eye of religion directs itself to the great God, to a glory which admits neither a superior nor an equal. The mind in heaven exercising itself upon those stupendous objects and events presented in the character and acts of Jehovah, will find some of its best enjoyments. But he that has lost his soul in this dark world below, will he find any delightful employment for his mental faculties? He will carry with him all his intellectual powers. But will he find any elevating objects of thought, and hours of bright and cheerful contemplation? Will all that is past afford one plrasant remembrance; will there be a single object *present* in all the universe on which the mind can fix with comfort? will the whole *future* eternity present one? Every object of thought will be one of gloom and wretchedness? every action of the mind will plant an unavailing sorrow in the heart. Can you conceive of the wretchedness of that individual to whom every succeeding thought brings a pang of unavoidable sorrow. Such is the long, long eternity of him who loses his soul. What shall it profit!

He that loses his soul in the world of woe, loses all the pleasures derived from the exercise of kind and benevolent feelings. It is more blessed to give than receive. The fullest wish for the good of another being, makes the heart happier that cherishes it. In heaven the kindly affections which flow out upon every inhabitant of that world, and feed and strengthen themselves by communicating this to all within their reach, bring into the soul a calm and pure happiness passing all understanding. But in the world of lost souls, no charities are known. Will the miserable dwellers there stretch out a hand to relieve a fellow-being? There is not one capable of relief in all that world; and if there were, none need it more than himself. The lost, moreover, will have no disposition to relieve or bless, or console. All the amiable feelings will have died; all the kind and social affections will have been extinguished; all the ties of brotherhood and friendship that bound him to any other creature that exists will have been severed. He stands alone, his soul, scathed and withered, hath nothing left but sins and woes. Who would possess such a soul? Who would become for eternity such a desolate, selfish, most wretched being?

He that loses his soul, loses all self-approbation and peace of conscience. Sweet consciousness of innocence! Self-approval, calm, soothing, peace of conscience! They that have this, experience in part the joys of heaven. The heart which is a stranger to it, never yet has learned what happiness is. Lost sinners have no peace of consesence, none of the sweet happiness of conscious innocence. But in place of it the heart is filled with bitter—most bitter, self-condemning, with the arrowy stings of deep remorse. How writhes the mind which remorse has seized; how throbs the heart with anguish most intense! It is the worm that never dies; the cold gnawing at the heart which never will cease; the fang piercing through the soul, making it quiver with torture, which will not be withdrawn for ever and ever. Who can endure it? Who *can* hear the ceaseless, eternal condemnation for his own wounded spirit: "Ye knew your duty, but ye did it not." Who can bear a guilty conscience for ever and ever, for ever and ever? Who would do it for the sake of a little earthly good?

To lose the soul, is to lose all purity, all moral worth. In that dark region, there is nothing amiable, nothing undefiled, nothing pure. Not a heart in all that world that has a single attractive quality, a single feature of loveliness; not a being there possesses one trait of excellence or worth. Every character is that of unmingled wickedness; every heart is black. Pollution, guilt, sin unrestrained, spreads and reigns through all the caverns of perdition. He that loses his soul, leaves all that is lovely, and good, and valuable, and pure, and worthy, and excellent, in this universe, and becomes one entire mass of sin.

"Oh, Sin! traitor to God, ruiner of man,
Mother of woe and death and hell,
Depth ever deepening, darkness dark'ning still:
Folly for wisdom, guilt for innocence,
Thing most unsightly,
Warring with God, and warring with holiness,
Desperate frenzy, madness of the will,
Drunkenness of the heart that nought can quench—
Oh, sin! cursed sin, traitor to God,
And ruiner of man; mother of woe,
And death and hell."

Can the soul never, never, never, be redeemed from this destroyer—no never! Who would become such a thing? Who would be such an unmingled corruption to all eternity? So does he become who is lost. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

I ought to add, he that loses his soul, loses all hope. Hope is one of the most cheerful guests of the human heart, the most constant and unfailing; it affords relief in pain, strength and courage in disaster; it is the sweetness of sorrow; it is the last friend that leaves us in the world. The world has its evils, its bitter disappointments, its calamities that are dark and fearful, its heavy afflictions that almost press the life from our hearts, and makes us faint and sink down into the grave. But in all these calamities and sufferings, hope, cheering hope, attends us, relieves our woes and keeps the heart from entire wretchedness. There never was a cloud so dark that hope would not send through it a cheering ray, the hour of greatest peril and deepest sorrowing and distress, has hope in it, and, of course, some mingled grains of comfort. On the death-bed to the very last, hope sits by and lights up the eye, when in consequence of the disease and the coming on of death, nothing else can. But when a sinner enters his home of sin and and misery, hope forsakes him; it is extinguished quite. Not its feeblest ray will cheer his heart again for ever and ever. Every expectation of any good, of one moment of happiness to all eternity has died within him. He is an object of black despair, of hopeless, utter, immeasurable, interminable misery.

"Burning continually, yet unconsumed,
Forever wasting, yet enduring still,
Dying perpetually, but never dead,
His are groans that never end, and sighs
That always sigh, and tears that ever weep!"

This is eternal death. This is the doom of him that loses his own soul!

Such is the doom to which this our spirit is exposed. This is the doom of which it is in the most imminent danger. This is the doom which vast multitudes receive. Here are we, then, all between the great inheritance of saints, and the dreadful doom of lost souls. What vast interests are connected with what we are, with what we do! No finite mind can measure or comprehend the good or ill which lie in the bosom of our futurity.

And will any individual in his right mind, instead of the eternal, progressive course of knowledge, of purity, of happiness take the descending path to perfect ruin, to infinite suffering? Have I any hearer who will himself sow seeds which are to bring forth the grapes of Sodom, who will kindle the fires in his own soul which shall no more be quenched; who will cherish the worm that shall never die? Have I a hearer who will do this instead of making his heart the seat of pure affections which will befit the kingdom of heaven; instead of making the same heart the abode of eternally augmenting joy and peace?

Act not, let me persuade you, against every remonstrance of conscience and every dictate of reason, and every chapter of the Bible, and every lesson of Divine Providence; act not against every consideration which should influence a rational being. Abandon such folly. Renounce such heaven provoking sin. I do call on you to flee from the wrath to come. Come that wrath most surely will. There is a world of woe, awful and eternal. Soon you will have no other home. Heaven, blessed heaven! Heaven of knowledge, heaven of holiness, of happiness! perfect, glorious, eternal heaven! Must these sinners never enter within thy gates; never know thy seraphic joys, never mingle with thy holy people, never love nor praise thy God, the light of thee, the glory of thee, the glory of the whole universe? Cease, ye hasty travellers to the eternal world, oh, cease this fond pursuit of earthly good, and lay hold on eternal life. "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Hazard not so vast an interest by deferring to a time which, because future, may never come. Settle the great infinite concern while you can, while it is called *to-day* "Do it now," says reason, says conscience. "Do it now," saith the Bible—heaven and hell respond, "Do it *now!*"

SERMON DCXXXIX.

BY REV. CHARLES WHITE, D.D.,

PRESIDENT OF WABASH COLLEGE.

OUR RELATION TO THE JUDGMENT.

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."—ROM. xiv 10

THE knowledge of a future existence, which men have obtained without the Scriptures, has been vague, doubtful, and indistinct. Mostly conjectures and waking dreams. The Bible makes us familiar with the future world, makes known and describes with much particularity its events, its objects, the various condition of intelligent beings there. We think and speak of the things which are to be in the next world, after death, as certainties, as realities clearly known and seen, much as we do of what is yet future of this life. Being deeply interested personally in what is to occur in the eternal world, it is of great consequence and great favor to us that its affairs and objects are so fully and intelligibly opened to us. (MATT. xxv.) There is no event of eternity of which the Scriptures give us information more eventful and important than that referred to in the text, the final general judgment.

Some have inquired, "What can be the need of the object of a judgment, since men go to their award immediately on leaving the world?" Doubtless the object is to justify the ways of God to man, to angels, to the universe. To do this by making a visible exhibition of divine retributive justice, by a public actual award to mankind, according to the deeds done here in the body. Men do not receive wholly according to their deserts in the present world. But God is just. We are made by God to revere only a Being of strict, unbending justice. Towards no other can we have the feelings which ought to be entertained towards a Supreme Divinity. Now, if vice be not fully punished in this world,and if virtue be not fully rewarded, it seems certain that a just God will appoint a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. It seems proper and suitable that it should be done in the presence of the world. The righteous will see an illustration, at the judgment, of God's holiness which they had never seen, and be led to admiration and adoration higher, almost infinitely, than they have ever rendered to him. And sinners will doubtless feel the justice of their condemnation, as they had never felt it. Sinners even will then exclaim, "Just and equal, oh God, are all thy ways!" A judgment earlier than the end of the world could not have all the facts developed by which to show the justice of the final decisions. The results of men's doings, good or bad, reach on augmenting through all generations. When the gathering influence issuing from each man's life, has all been collected into one mighty accumulation, then the judgment will open.

Let us now inquire what is our own relation to the great day of account,

What are the conditions and circumstances in which we shall appear before the Supreme Judge of quick and dead.

I. We shall on that day assume in all respects the, condition in which we shall remain—remain for ever.

Then all that pertains to our being is settled, fixed, definitely, finally. Previously changes had attended us always; we never in all respects were just what we had been before, we were incessantly changing form, place, circumstances. The body itself had been undergoing a concealed change as to its matter and substance, and a visible one in its growth through infancy, childhood, to full vigor; and then in its progress to decay, and death, and dissolution. The soul had been subject to mutations no less visible and striking. Its desires, purposes, passions, pleasures, griefs, had been undergoing large unceasing changes. Uncertainty, too, had been the condition of our being, we were habitually in suspence respecting the future, *never knowing* what would be even on the morrow. So doubtful were all things which were yet to come, that anticipation, conjecture, apprehension, were prevailing states of the soul. Both vicissitude and uncertainty, being the prominent conditions of our life, were subjects of more remark and moralizing than all others united. It was on every tongue, that nothing was lasting or permanent with us, nothing certain; that there was no rest, that life was like a tale that is *told*; not a record, remark, or inscription upon marble, a constant succession of new words, new incidents, so that we never knew what was yet to come.

At the day of judgment, all this is reversed entirely. Then all change with us and all uncertainty cease; there is no more even the *shadow* of turning in any respect. What we are on that day, we are for ever and ever. Before were preparations, now effects; before antecedents, now results. The body undergoes a great change at the resurrection, is made spiritual, incorruptible, immortal, susceptible of pleasure or pain beyond what it had been inconceivably. But this is its last change. The body stands up before God just as it will be to all eternity. The soul, too, in this refitted lodgement, possesses the appetites and designs, the whole moral aspect and condition precisely, which it will retain unaltered. This is the grand final crisis in its moral concerns, in its immortality. It is to be moulded and formed no more. All that can affect us at all, is past; we are fixed. We have had various allotments, now the allotment is one and eternal. If outward circumstances were to change, we should not. But outward things will not change. We and our circumstances all are settled as the pillars of heavens.

There is no place for anticipation, all is present; nor for apprehension, all that will be, is. There is no more hope, no more fear, all is existent reality, stern, uniform, unchanging, unchangeable. Succession of time is no more. Henceforth all is one steady, unalterable, eternal, now!! Oh, if such is the crisis in my being and my condition at the judgment of the great day: if there I am to be fixed unchangeably and eternally, both in soul and body; if as I am then, so I am to be for ever; what shall I be then? What character shall I present to take the unchanging, unchangeable stamp of eternity? How solicitous should we be, if for this *life* our condition were to be all fixed on a certain day of it. It with our advantages and disadvantages on that certain day; if with the same heart, honor, wealth, happiness, home, friends, society, we should ever after unalterably remain. How careful to place ourselves in the best possible position! What character, impenitent one, will you form and wear to appear in at the judgment, never to be changed through all the interminable ages which follow? At any hour you may drop into eternity, with your present heart, never, never to be improved. Then are you lost irrevocably. Escape, cast off these garments of sin, and put on the garments of light.

II. We shall appear at the judgment with our *character* only.

In this world men appear with so much that is extraneous to what is really themselves, with so much that is mere outside show, with so many appurtenances, that we seldom see simple men, real human character, uncolored, uncovered, just as it is. It seems to be the very general desire of men, not to *be*, but to *appear* to be; to be accredited for something whether possessed or not. I suppose it may with truth be said that one half of the labors and endeavors of this life are to make these appearances; when this is not the aim or the effort, it may still be true that the real character may be covered over and concealed by wealth and titles and honors, and great pretensions. Perhaps I am making a representation which may seem rather too strong. But to a great extent certainly human life is a factitious scene, a great deal is mere profession, gay decoration, superficial show.

We are all dazzled and caught with appearance; we all think too little, and care too little, for substance, for interior solid excellence. At the judgment we shall appear stripped of all disguises and all extraneous adornings—mere human beings, simple men, nothing more; unvarnished, unconcealed men. An existing soul with its renewed body; existence and attributes of existence—*being* and its character—this will be all. Every thing else will be left behind us. Authors will be there without their renown; poets and philosophers will stand in the same indiscriminate mass with those their cotemporaries, too ignorant to know that they lived. The orator will be there without the charms of his eloquence, without the thrilled and applauding assembly, all *simple men*, with their character. The king will be there without his crown or sceptre; the slave without his chains. All the men of place and power and pride, without their honors, without their titles, without their worldly elevation. The conqueror will be there without the splendor of his achievements, or the fame of his military prowess. Alexander, Napoleon, Wellington, will stand there by the side of the humblest menial; men no more; men all undistinguished except in the moral qualities of the soul. The young absorbed with tempting pleasures, they that had rolled in wealth, and erected splendid dwellings, shone in equipage, and fared sumptuously every day, will be there with nothing of all they appeared with here, poor as the neglected being that slept upon straw and begged from door to door—mere *men*, with nothing but their character. How ignorant, how empty, how little is left, when the temporary and the external is gone! when all is gone except vanity, pride, folly, and sin. Ah, how poor will multitudes appear with only their character!

What is my character? this is the important question. All that I can carry with me to the judgment of the great day are the unmasked attributes of my soul. What is my *real character* in the sight of God? Did a human being ever propose to himself a more momentous inquiry? Your *character!* It is every thing to you; it is all you have; it decides and settles every thing. Have you the character with which you are willing to stand at the bar of God; which will admit you into heaven!

III. This suggests the third topic of discourse All character is to undergo a full examination at the day of judgment.

We shall appear then for this purpose. The scripture use the language of earthly courts of justice in relation to this our appearance before God for an investigation of our character. Jesus is called the Judge. He is said to descend out of heaven, girded with principalities and powers, and with great glory, to sit upon a throne of judgment, and all the holy angels with him.

Then we are informed, mankind are assembled before him, each for examination and trial. This last audit will be in many respects different from one before a human tribunal. Earthly judges are ignorant and imperfect men; they may unconsciously and without design, prompted by the best intentions even,mistake facts,err in opinion, pronounce a rotten character sound. Passion and prejudice may make their decisions partial and wrong, "a gilded hand may shove by justice." The *deeply* wicked may have some hopes at the bar of a fellow man, not himself of clean hands. *Often* do the guilty here go undetected and unpunished. But the Judge at whose bar we shall stand at the last day is not ignorant. We shall find ourselves before one who knows more of us than we know of ourselves, who at an instant glance passes over our conduct and through our hearts. His is an eye of omniscience; nothing belonging to us is concealed from him any more than our persons can be from the eye of each other. And he is not partial; nor is he capable of bribes, of prejudice, of any injustice. *No wickedness whatever will escape detection* and exposure at the bar of God.

Unlike earthly courts, witnesses and proofs will not be wanted or waited for. Every man will be his own witness. Memory, furnished with new vigor and fidelity, will retrace every step of life, and present every outward act, every moving of the internal spirit in one distinct, full picture; the conscience, wakened from the dead, clear, unbiassed, unerring, will see and know and declare the whole character of the man. If this were not so, no witnesses would be wanted. The Almighty will be witness as well as judge. At his bar it matters not if your deeds were those of a darkness so deep that no eye of a fellow being could penetrate, so distant no ear could hear; no matter if done on some lone isle beyond the possibility of all earthly observation. No matter if memory and conscience were hushed, so as never to reveal. The omnipresent God was with you and heard and saw all that was felt and done. All is perfectly known.

You will mark what has been just now intimated, that the examination before the bar of God will extend to the *intents of the heart.* A trial at an earthly tribunal has little to do except with external actions. If the designs and desires of the spirit within never proceed to development and to action, what can civil courts do with them? They have no jurisdiction over the movements of the soul. Anger and revenge may rankle there; the vilest passions, the most destructive propensities may be fed and nourished there into fearful strength ; and earthly judges may take no cognizance and make no inquiries ; they may have no knowledge of the matter.

This little busy world within, though the spring of all our actions, though the abode of all the elements of our character, yet lying beyond the scrutiny of human tribunals ; human laws have no penalties for what dwells there. How different from this our examination at the day of judgment. The character and operations of the heart, the inward temper, the desires, the motives, will be the principal and most important subjects of inquiry. The examination will be no less than a search into the purity and impurity of every emotion that ever existed in the soul. The purity or impurity of every word that the tongue has uttered of every action that the hand has done.

Nor is this the whole investigation. We shall be inquired of as to all that we have *neglected to feel or to do.* We shall be interrogated as to all the wants of men which we did not relieve ; the woes of men which we did not pity ; as to all the instances in which we did not weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice ; as to all the instances in which we might have blessed a fellow being, but did not ; in which we might have been grateful to God ; been filled with the moving of deep affection for his pure character ; been exercised with holy trusting in his government and his grace, and were not,—I need not proceed. All that we have felt, all that we have not felt, all that we have said or not said ; done and not done, all that we are, and all that we are not, is to be examined and unfolded there—the entire man ; the whole character of his heart and his acts.

Who can abide such a scrutiny ? Who dares open his inmost soul to the eye of God, and then receive according to his character? What disclosures at the judgment ! How confounded will men be to see their secret wickedness all developed to open day. What shame and confusion and alarm, when all their thoughts and feelings throng before them. Oh ! the foul abominations that never before saw the light, when all human conduct is declared. The hatreds, the envies, the jealousies, the bitterness, the selfishness, the impurities, the ingratitude, the murmurings, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made known Add no more guilt to your character. Lengthen no farther your fearful catalogue of sins. Stop, stop ! Seek forgiveness and mercy of heaven. Seek for Christ's righteousness to cover the multitude of your sins. It is too far that you have gone already. Pause before you farther go.

IV. You have anticipated my next remark A separation will take place among us at the judgment.

There will be then no more mingling and confounding of moral qualities, whether relating to the human heart or to human life. The right and the wrong, the pure and the vile, will stand visibly at *distant extremes* from each other, and without any relationship, sympathy, or communion.

To *every eye* of every intelligent being, they will *appear* at a wide remove from each other—all will *feel* the broad distinction.

This, so marked, so entire, so seen, so felt, is at the judgment, the grand distinction in which all others are lost. What though one had honors, or had wealth, or had education, or gifted intellect or were prominent in the circle of fashion or pleasure, or were thrifty in business added field to field, and had not where to bestow his goods! *Is he right or is he wrong?* Is he good, or is he bad, before God? This is the only inquiry at the day of judgment. This, and nothing but this, divides, the universe. Oh, how worthless, how insignificant, at the bar of God, all these worldly possessions and elevations that interest us now! what shadows! A moment they are with us and are gone, leaving no trace, no benefit. *To be good, or to be bad!* This makes a distinction, indeed; one of immeausrable importance. Neither time, nor death,nor *eternity*, can annihilate it. It *widens* as futurity rolls it ages away.

I have said a separation is to take place at the judgment. We perceive when all is thus unveiled, when all human character is thus laid open, it takes place of itself. Tell us not that the great Judge of all is arbitrary partial, or unjust in the last great separation. This distinction of character, so wide, so perfect, so important, in which all other distinctions are lost, placing men in moral qualities at a distance from each other, no less than Satan is from God, hell from heaven; this, all open and apparent, will of itself produce the final separation, will remove the righteous and the wicked widely and for ever away from each other, as light from darkness. They cannot join in the same employments, they cannot mingle and associate in the same society, cannot dwell in the same world

What an innumerable multitude will be present, and be interested in this scene of separation. All the inhabitants of our country—twenty-six millions—collected together, would make a great assembly. Imagine the inhabitants of the whole earth assembled—a thousand millions. Add this number to itself, 10, 20, 40, 80, 100 times: what throngs of millions! But you have scarcely begun the computation of all the generations which the stream of time hath poured into the mighty multitude before God. The vast congregation is almost of numbers without number. We are not so much interested, however, in that fact, as in this included in it, that this very assembly will be there to be divided. Oh, to be divided! We have lived and loved in peace; may we not dwell together? These families, may *they* not dwell together? No, there must be a separation: friendship, affection, relationship, are not regarded. No distinction is known but good and bad. The good are not those who have entirely *kept* the law—none have done this—the good are those who have repented, and had their sins blotted out; believed, and had them forgiven—those who have been renovated, sanctified, accepted.

The separation is between the penitent and impenitent, the believing and the unbelieving. This distinction sunders families; this divides friends, kindred, all. A husband is called to the one side; the wife to the other. Parents are called to one side, children to the other. What partings! Can it be a reality? Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and friends part, not as on earth to reassemble and reunite—they part never again to meet. Oh, what partings! They have sat at the same board, joyed and suffered and lived as one. They cannot part. They that have lived in brotherhood and affection; in blessed intercourse and sympathy: they cannot part. The father cannot part with his son; brother cannot part from brother. But they must. No, no, no; they need not! The Day of Judgment has not come. They need not; they must not! It is yet a day of grace. I hear words of mercy. Seize the precious hour while it waits; make your peace with God, and you shall not be divided; you yet shall be one.

But many, many will be found who deferred, deferred, and lost their day of grace, and died in all their sins. Thoughtless millions will have been guilty of this folly. Perhaps some of this assembly may after all be among these. The great assemblage before God is divided—the righteous from the wicked. Then the Omniscient Judge shall say to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But to them on his left hand he shall say, "Depart from me." Could you hear it, and live? *From me!* from all mercy, all good, all purity, all happiness—from the only Saviour of men! Who can, who shall, hear such words from Jesus the Redeemer? Then shall he say to them on his left hand, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." And these—*these*, who are *these*? And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. And is this never to be revoked? No; never! The wicked are never again to smile; the righteous never again to weep.

This is the closing scene of this world's affairs. Here ends all that God wished to do on this theatre, all that he wished to develope. All the nations that were to appear, had appeared; all the petty states that were to rise and fall, had risen and fallen; all the crowns been worn, all the honors been gained, all the servitude and submissions been rendered, justice had done its earthly work; oppression all it could. Righteousness had its day and wickedness. The earth had made its revolutions; the stars run their courses, the seasons been finished, days had been numbered to come not again, the sun and moon had accomplished their purposes, and cease to move and shine. All conversation and intercourse had ceased; all sound of joy or praise or blasphemy was done. All was done. All the world's feverish agitation, ambitious projects, enterprises, distinctions, joys, sorrows, hopes, all had come to pass. Another, a new, an eternal scene is opened.

Thus is the judgment a grand epoch in the progress of God's infinite affairs—the day of days. All has been merged in one great distinction of good and bad; and, as we have said, the good are gathered into heaven—the bad shut up in hell. The earth and the works that are therein, are burned up; the heavens are passed away with a great noise. Here we ought to inquire;

1. What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.

Every Christian is most deeply interested in the solemnities of the judgment day. The most glorious and the most awful of all motives here summon you to righteousness and to duty. "Buried in sleep," indeed thrice dead you must be, "if you do not feel yourselves roused by these awful things to diligence and vigor in the christian life." Is there any thing you would not do to rescue your immortality from the doom of ungodly men.

"Let me solemnly urge you to make your calling and election sure, to resist temptation, to overcome iniquity, to keep the faith, that you may finish your course with joy. Look steadfastly, Christian, for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ, that when he, who is the believer's life, shall appear, you may appear with him in glory."

2. But are there not many in this house whose lives furnish no evidence that they are the saints of the most high God? You, too, are interested yea, most fearfully interested in the great day of the Lord. All shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. All of us shall hear "the call of the archangel," and rise from the grave; all of us shall see the Judge descend, the judgment of the final day revealed, the books opened. Who of us will appear there to receive the sinner's last sentence.

That doom is terrific, overwhelming, eternal, irrevocable. Must it be heard? Shall it be? Whose heart does not tremble at the thought that it *may be* all his own? When the mountains quake, the hills melt and the earth is burnt up at the presence of God; all the wicked will be filled with consternation and despair. Who can stand before the divine indignaton? who can abide the fierceness of his anger? What emotions will be felt by every impenitent man, when it is all over with him, and he is lost—lost irrecoverably! Is he ruined, undone? Is there no hope Oh, his bursting heart! He cannot bear his doom. He cannot endure everlasting burnings. How would his bosom "heave with delirious ecstacy to hear of another day of grace!" another word of mercy from the Saviour; another opportunity of repentance.

"But no day of grace will ever return to him;" no voice of mercy will ever reach him. He goes to his home, dark, dreadful, eternal. *He has gone!* Oh! he has gone. "The doors of heaven will be opened no more." "Not one gleam of hope," age after age, as eternity moves on, not one gleam of hope will ever dawn on the regions of sin and sorrow, where he dies, and dies forever

"Oh, that ye were wise, that ye understood these things, that ye would consider your latter end!"

END OF VOLUME TWENTY-EIGHT

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